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THE
RED RIVER INSURRECTION

A CRITICAL HISTORY
OF THE
RED RIVER INSURRECTION

AFTER
OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND NON-CATHOLIC
SOURCES

by

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Western Canada, Histoire de l'Eglise Catholique dans l'Ouest
Canadien, Histoire abrégée de l'Ouest Canadien,
Vie de Mgr Langevin, The Macdonell
Family in Canada, etc.

Arm thyself for the truth.

—B.-Lytton.

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FOREWORD

This volume needs no preface. Its three chapters of introductory matter more than make up for one. We will here merely call attention to one or two points of a somewhat personal nature, over which we hope the reader will kindly go before tackling the opening of our History.

In the first place, contrary to what happened to our other books, which were published as soon as written, this, in spite of the fact that its preparation had been urged on us by a party whose wishes were for us orders, remained ignominiously pigeon-holed for fully six years in manuscript form. The reason for this was the unavoidable controversial, or rather critical, complexion of its pages.

Our previous productions had gained for us a reputation of impartiality of which any historian might well be proud. Were we to lose that reputation by the publication of what people ignorant of the nonsense written on the subject would be tempted to consider an unnecessarily harsh, if not one-sided, contribution to history, in spite of the fact that we never hesitate to blame Riel whenever we find him at fault? We might add that some of those we feel bound to criticize were but yesterday among our best friends.

Four of these will be found represented in one of our illustrations. Take, for instance, the last of them, Rev. A. C. Garrioch, whom we have more than once to take

to task for statements and appreciations which could not be left unchallenged. Will it be believed that the venerable old man was a real friend of ours who, but one week before his demise, reminded us in a charming letter of the mutual esteem and consideration which had for years sweetened our personal relations? It is not pleasant to have to contradict such beautiful figures.

Nevertheless truth before all, such has ever been our slogan. Sentiment must not interfere with the dictates of impartiality when it is a question of history. We could only regret that our delay in issuing the present work deprives us of the satisfaction of seeing those we criticize take cognizance of our strictures and of letting them have a chance to defend their own views, should they be imprudent enough to try it in the face of the array of first-class authorities, on which we base our assertions. We would then have easily found many more to still strengthen our own position.

Past associations and erroneous ideas concerning the aims of the Métis resulting from ignorance of their language had caused Mr. Garrioch to give expression to unjust criticism. We fear that, in many other cases, the censors of the same could not have pleaded so valid excuses.

Be this as it may, such as is the present work, we confidently offer it to the serious consideration of the fair-minded student—the opinions of others can have no weight with us.

One of its features will, we imagine, compensate for its possible shortcomings. We mean the numerous references and footnotes it contains. For these we bespeak the greatest attention. Nowadays such references and notes are a sine quâ non condition of scien-

tific value, especially when they come, as in our case, from the opposite camp and are means of supporting the author's contentions. Furthermore many a note, we presume to think, will illuminate points of our text with a light which is bound to add to its lucidity.

At any rate, at this stage of historical researches, a book without notes is not much more than a skeleton without flesh, or at least a body without muscles. As a partial confirmation of this we shall end by the present remark which the reader will find on page 197 of this volume:

“ We could not locate that quotation of the English author, who never gives any reference in the course of his big book. . . This exemplifies perhaps the least of the disadvantages consequent on the omission of all references in a book which would fain be taken seriously. Such works as are shorn of all references or foot-notes have scarcely any scientific value whatever. They contain apparently nothing but the opinions of one man, the author, which may be devoid of all weight, and state facts, real or pretended, for the accuracy of which there is no warrant and which, for the lack of references, cannot be controlled ”.

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A CRITICAL HISTORY OF THE RED RIVER INSURRECTION

CHAPTER I

A TRAVESTY OF HISTORY AND ITS CAUSES

“It is not without misgivings that the historian of the Catholic Church in Western Canada comes upon the years 1869-70. Everyone knows the trite saying that history is a conspiracy against truth. We doubt if there is a period in the whole past of man in America to which that remark can be more appropriately applied. Hence, in order to reproduce the events of those troubled times with the complexion that is really theirs, we must run counter to the fables and fabrications, the groundless surmises and misrepresentations which racial and religious prejudices have so far given as the expression of truth in nearly all English works.

“While we firmly propose to continue in our role of dispassionate historian, we run the risk of being accused of partisanship simply because our knowledge of the real facts, their causes and effects bids us keep clear of the slanders, gratuitous innuendoes and erroneous assertions with which English-speaking readers have hitherto been regaled ¹. ”

¹ “Let it be understood once for all that, as we have made of that particular question an exhaustive study, we are in a position to substantiate every one of our statements”.—Note to our *History*.

Such are the opening sentences of our account of those events in our *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*². This work being now out of print, except in a four-volume French edition which is not of much use to most of the English readers, it is our purpose, in conformity with an implicit promise in the same³, to give in the following pages a fuller and no less authoritative account of those troubles. Now as then we shall base our assertions, especially those of a contentious nature, not on Catholic writers, even when they were eye-witnesses to the facts they relate, but on Protestant authorities and the official documents of the time.

On the other hand, in order to explain the startling discrepancies between those facts and the disfigurement of the same current in most English books on the subject, it seems expedient, if not necessary, to give the reasons of such differences and to point to the causes of the wild misrepresentations which have long passed for the truth, misrepresentations which even a few ill-advised writers of our day try to put back on the pedestal of History, after they had been knocked off their usurped place by the above mentioned work.

And lest we should be suspected of exaggerating the effects of that book on public opinion, at least among people who are not above confessing a wrong, and thereby make all the clearer the guilt of those who would fain resuscitate obsolescent calumnies, we must be allowed to reproduce the following passages from the press and regional literature of twenty-five years ago, which may be taken as representative of others.

² P. 1 of vol. II; Toronto, 1910.

³ "*Deo volente*, and health permitting, we may later on write a full history of the Red River insurrection" (*Ibid.*, *ibid.*, p. 2).

The reviewer of the Winnipeg *Telegram* then wrote of our History:

“One of the most interesting portions of the book is Father Morice’s account of the troublesome days at the time when Manitoba was taken into confederation. He approaches the subject from a different standpoint to the generally accepted histories. Time is softening the bitter feelings and the racial and religious prejudices which that outbreak occasioned, and there is a growing inclination to regard Riel with kindlier eyes.

“Father Morice takes strenuous objection to the term rebellion as applied to the Riel uprising. Insurrection is the word he uses, and the writer must admit his arguments in favor of his contention, which are strong ones”.

Then, after having summed up those arguments, the same writer concludes by a sentence which is in itself a revelation, after the unbecoming tirades against Louis Riel which were then an *obbligato* accompaniment to the mere mention of his name: “History is coming more and more to take the view of Father Morice”⁴.

So far the daily press, of which many other testimonies could be adduced which go to show that the falseness of previous accounts of that uprising had been duly noted and implicitly admitted⁵.

As to the literature of a more permanent character, a subsequent author, Isaac Cowie, though a former official of the company which practically had the power

⁴ *The Telegram*, March 19, 1910.

⁵ For instance, the *Free Press*, of the same city, practically approved our contention as to the injustice done the memory of Riel and friends when, without ever contesting one of our assertions, and appreciations, it remarked that, in that *History*, we discuss “in an unprejudiced, but at the same time unmistakable

in its hands when Riel's action commenced in Red River, made, after the publication of our History, the following remarks in an interesting volume of reminiscences.

"The proper course for Governor McTavish and the Council of Assiniboine⁶ to have taken was to have suppressed the *Nor'wester*⁷ newspaper for seditious libel against the constituted authorities, to have arrested the surveyors of the Canadian Government as trespassers, and, if 'Governor' McDougall and his retinue entered [the] territory as unwarranted invaders, to cast them also in gaol as rebels against the *de facto* Government of the country, as recognized by the Imperial authorities"⁸.

But there is not to-day an author conversant with the circumstances as they were then who imagines that anything of the kind could have been expected of an Administration which was moribund and incapable of any show of energy.

and unaswerable, manner, the causes and the legitimacy of the Red River insurrection" (*Ibid.*, 9 april, 1910). The *Daily Sun*, of Brandon, admitted that our account of the R. R. Insurrection was "dispassionate and after unimpeachable sources" (11 April, 1910), which is tantamount to saying that that paper concurs in our protest against the unwarranted calumnies heaped on Riel's devoted head.

Even in Toronto, some periodicals, while apparently startled by the blows of our irrecusable authorities, felt bound to implicitly, and probably most unwillingly, admit the truth of our contentions when, as the *Saturday Night* (3 April, 1910), they registered our protests against the current aspersions on the Métis' good name, which can also be said of the *World* of the same place (20 March, 1910).

⁶ A misprint for Assiniboia.

⁷ The first newspaper of the country, whose initial number appeared on Dec., 1859.

⁸ *The Company of Adventurers*, p. 450. Toronto, 1913.

Farther on, the same writer goes even to the length of making this significant confession: "I think now—though, in common with those of my kind, I was far from so thinking then—that the first intentions of any action taken by the French halfbreeds in resisting the illegal entry of Mr. William McDougall and his party of 'carpet-baggers' (the first of a subsequent host) was admirable and, in view of the inaction of Governor McTavish and the Council of Assiniboia, that it was justifiable and even legal".

Of the Métis in arms Cowie says: "When we consider the passions aroused and their easy access to the rum casks of the Company at Fort Garry, it is truly remarkable how few outrages on person and property were committed in that period of excitement by these wild hunters of the plains. Compared with the Boers of South Africa, the Métis of Rupert's Land were gentlemen" ⁹.

Another western author, Dr. Norman Fergus Black, has written a voluminous *History of the Province of Saskatchewan*, wherein he never dares call the Red River outbreak a rebellion, but says that "by way of protest against the colossal folly and unpardonable bungling of the Imperial and Dominion authorities, an extra - constitutional government [Riel's] held full sway for a period of about nine months" ¹⁰.

Farther on in the same book, that historian, who so far disagrees with his fellow English authors by merely refraining from the use of a slandering word to which

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 451. Other authors have since concurred in that judgment.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 144. Regina, [1915]. Though he never acknowledges his obligations to them, even in its preface, all his information on the Catholic Church is condensed from the two volumes of our *Hist. of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*.

they almost all resort, comes formally to concur in the present writer's views when he has it that "the French clergy, *like the writer of this book* (italics ours), did not look upon the establishment of a provisional government by Riel and his associates as in any sense an act of rebellion" ¹¹.

Finally, a still better known author, Robert Watson, though connected with the Hudson's Bay Company, but lately (1932) declared in a public speech that "Louis Riel is undoubtedly the most lurid and tragic individual figure to stalk across the pages of Manitoba's wonderful history. It is well within the bounds of probability that, before fifty more years have gone, there will be a monument to his memory on the Parliament Building grounds, erected by a forgiving and grateful Manitoba public" ¹².

In the face of these and other testimonies of which we shall avail ourself in the course of the present work, we may be warranted to ask: Why then this formerly general hostility of English authors to Riel and followers, an hostility which some of to-day's writers would fain revive? What were the causes of it?

These were many, and certainly those we are going to indicate. The least culpable and most easily excusable were ignorance and credulity, as well as a lack of comprehension of a complicated situation based on diversity of language. The greater part of the English-speaking population of Red River never understood the aims and aspirations of the French halfbreeds, and those who went to them for information were sometimes given as an answer the wild declamations

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 528.

¹² From a speech reported in the Winnipeg papers, and kindly corrected for the author by the speaker himself.

of a young Irishman who, politically, was at the antipodes of the Métis ¹³.

But it is our painful duty to declare at the outset that the main reason for the ludicrous deformation of facts and travesty of intentions as presented by English historians has been that great mischief-maker, prejudice, a many-headed hydra which has been responsible for all the trouble, and has at times rendered well-nigh ridiculous authors who were privately perfect gentlemen and honourable citizens.

The first form of that mental disease which caused those falsehoods was racial prejudice, that subtle innate aversion for the French which is so often lurking hidden in the folds of British brains. Of which more will appear in the course of these pages.

If the usual Briton can hold in such low esteem those who descend from what other people called *la grande nation*, what will be his disdain for a batch of mere halfbreeds: Indians on their mother's side and French through their father or grandfather? To him these are, or were in 1869, scarcely worth a thought, beings almost unfit even for the humble role of a servant.

And to say that it was bands of those lowly and thoroughly despised people who kept at bay and utterly defeated hundreds of blue-blooded Britons, or descendants of Britons! This was altogether too much, and could not have happened without recourse to machinations of the deepest dye. Hence the wild statements and perfidious innuendoes which have been resorted to as some sort of compensation for the inglorious fiasco of Riel's adversaries.

Let the candid and unprejudiced reader keep this well before his mind, until we come to the exposé of

¹³ We mean William B. O'Donoghue, of whom more anon.

the various phases of the resistance offered by the Métis to the unwarranted intrusion with which the present work is concerned. Most of the aspersions on the natives of Red River who forestalled oppression by the new-comers are nothing but the result of the spite, soreness and vexation at having been worsted by them. Once more, let this be ever remembered.

In connection with this contempt of the Métis by English authors and the ridiculous fables it has engendered, we may refer to the assertion of one of them, Dr. Charles Mulvaney, himself no friend of their leader, since he had to relate the measures taken to put down his first and only rebellion, that of the Saskatchewan.

“Notice may be taken”, he says, “of the many recklessly false tales set forth as to Riel’s career, by authors who get up what purposes to be ‘histories’ on the plan of the dime novel. One such writer informs his readers that the reason Riel had for the Scott murder (*sic*) was that both were in love with the same girl¹⁴. As a matter of fact, Riel could not have seen the young lady on whom Scott’s affections were placed, who lived, or still lives, in a city of Ontario never visited by Riel”¹⁵.

Though we have but lately noticed in that author this reference to the many inventions of the Simon-pure historians hailing from the East, we have from the start been conversant with the particular detail which occasioned it, but had deemed it below our dignity to as much as notice it in our previous works. While, for the sake of illustration, we had mentioned

¹⁴ Riel was never accused of being of an amatory disposition.

¹⁵ *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885*, by Chas. P. Mulvaney, p. 26; Toronto, 1886.

some of the epithets lavished on the Métis chief and his followers by that prince of anti-French scribblers, we had not even stooped to give the title of his scurrilous production. In order that our present reader may have an idea of the orgy of contumely, the foamings of impotent rage which the hatred of some writers can resort to at the mere mention of him who, according to the first Lieut.-Governor of Manitoba, saved the country to the British Crown¹⁶, here are some of the pearls which the coarse quill-driver in question generously throws at the feet of Riel:

“Rebel, murderer, wily traitor, cunning deceiver, agitator, ambitious adventurer, dangerous Guiteau¹⁷ of the plains, rebel ruffian, autocrat, vengeful Riel, miscreant, tyrant, greasy rebel, presumptuous crank, arch-rebel, vindictive tyrant, blood-thirsty president, bloody Guiteau, greasy murderer, beastly and murderous tyrant, worthless vagabond, rascal, felon, criminal, unhung felon ”¹⁸.

Is that enough? Is not the anonymous pamphleteer sufficiently betraying his soreness at Riel's success? If not, you may presume that he has exhausted his stock of nasty epithets. He furthermore constantly speaks of the Métis leader's “murderous and wolfish eyes”; he asserts that his “eyes gleamed with a wolfish light ” — he seems quite familiar with wolves — that “he was possessed with a spirit of the most devilish rage ” — an eloquent *crescendo* — that “he raged like

¹⁶ “If the halfbreeds had taken a different course [than that followed by Riel and his in 1871], I do not believe the province would now be in our possession ” (Report of the Select Committee 1874, p. 153).

¹⁷ Guiteau was the assassin of President Garfield.

¹⁸ *The Story of Louis Riel, passim*; Toronto, 1885.

a wild bull " — how terrible! — that he spoke "in a tone of diabolical raillery " — better and better! etc.

Such are the excesses to which racial antipathies and passions can lead! And all this of a man who is universally recognized as having been not only essentially religious, but the very soul of courtesy and politeness; a man whom even one of his modern traducers, the Rev. R. G. MacBeth, declares to have been "by no means without heart" ¹⁹ — and MacBeth knew him personally — a man who, the same author admits, was "true to his French politeness even in his rage" ²⁰, and whom another of his enemies, Capt. W. F. Butler, despite his evident desire to ridicule him, shows to have acted towards himself in a much more creditable manner than he (Butler) did towards him, who was then somewhat in the position of his host ²¹.

But that is not all. To the author of that travesty of history to which we were referring above, Father Ritchot, parish priest of Saint Norbert, on the Sale River, is the "great swaggering, windy père (*sic*) Richot (*sic*), a coarse person, a crocmitaine priest", whatever that may mean ²². As to Ambroise D.

¹⁹ *The Making of the Canadian West*, p. 80; Toronto, 1905, Nay, he was widely known for his kindly dispositions when not aroused by opposition.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²¹ *The Great Lone Land*, p. 134. London, 1872. Butler's conduct on that occasion was simply outrageous, if faithfully chronicled. In fact, it is scarcely believable that his account of it is not overdone.

²² It may be doubted whether the ignorant author of the pamphlet knew it himself. Of course, he means *croque-mitaine*, which is French, not English, and is sometimes used in the former language for bogey, bugbear, being to French children of the Old World about the equivalent of the Cree *windigo*, representing as it does a fantastic, legendary being of harmful dispositions.

Lépine, that beautiful specimen of physical humanity, according to MacBeth²³, he was, of course, Riel's "infamous lieutenant", one of his "bloodhounds", etc.

Nay, even that prototype of the Christian gentleman, sweet Bishop Taché, who had made the sacrifice of attendance at the Œcumenical Council of the Vatican to oblige the Canadian Government, is to that vile slanderer "the same bishop whose name so many hundreds of thousands of our people cannot recall without bitterness and indignation"²⁴.

And why? What a naive question! Was he not French as was also that real, though not infallible, statesman and promoter of the Canadian Confederation, Sir Georges Etienne Cartier, whose "short-sighted policy" another French-eater, Capt. G. L. Huyshe, deplores²⁵, at the same time as he sneers at the "puny efforts of Bishop Taché and his party to check [Manitoba's] growth"!

The above-mentioned fanatic and dealer in dime novels has at least the decency to keep himself in the back-ground and remain anonymous. What shall we say of responsible parties such as, for instance, Dr. George Bryce, who accuses the St. Boniface priests of 1869 of forming "a dangerous religious element in the country — ecclesiastics from old France — who had no love for Britain, no love for Canada, no love for any country, no love for society²⁶, no love for peace"²⁷?

²³ "A striking figure was this Ambroise Lépine, a man of magnificent physique, standing fully six feet three and built in splendid proportions, straight as an arrow, with hair of raven blackness, large aquiline nose and eyes of piercing brilliance" (*The Making of the Canadian West*, p. 43.

²⁴ *The Story of Louis Riel*, pp. 27, 28.

²⁵ *The Red River Expedition*, p. 212; Toronto, 1886.

²⁶ Anarchists, nihilists, communists, or what?

The same author who, as a clergyman, should have been a lover of truth if not of charity. calls them in the same breath "plotters" who act "with Jesuitical cunning"!

As to that humble, meek and almost scrupulous Oblate, Father Lestanc, he was, in the eyes of the Presbyterian minister, nothing else than "the prince of plotters, who has generally been credited with belonging to the Jesuit order" ²⁸—how awful! — "a daring and extreme man—*risum teneatis amici* ²⁹ — in a word "the violent and dastardly Lestanc" ³⁰.

One of Bryce's co-religionists, the Rev. R. G. MacBeth, is not quite so hysterical. Yet, but one page after he has assured us of Riel's good heart, he declares that he was a "mad man", an individual who "played fast and loose with pledges"; and he professes to recall "the imprecations invoked upon his arrogant insolence" ³¹, while, five pages farther, he credits him with the intention of "sending a party of men out to meet [Wolseley's soldiers] with snow-shoes", to facilitate their coming in winter, in case they cannot arrive before!

This does not prevent another Protestant clergyman, the Rev. George Young, from styling Louis Riel an "upstart tyrant", whose "tyranny was felt for ten long months" ³². Further on, the same writer de-

²⁷ Outlaws or worse, apparently. *The Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, p. 462; London, s. d. Yet many English honestly believe him to have been a real historian, nay an authority on the West!

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 469. *Inde irae!*

²⁹ "Refrain from laughing, friends".

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

³¹ *The Making of the Can. West*, p. 81.

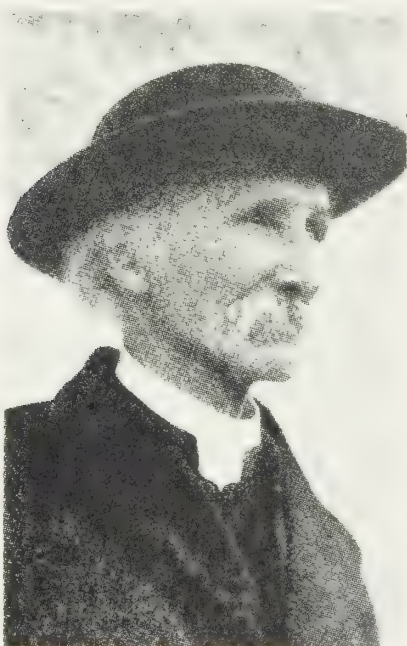
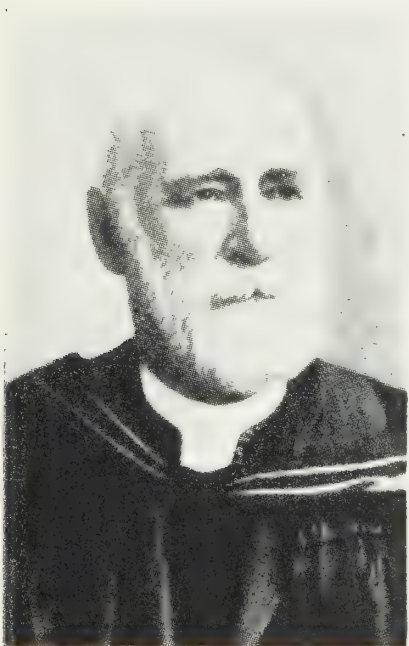
³² *Manitoba Memories*, p. 107; Toronto, 1897.



Rev. Geo. Young
Rev. Geo. Bryce



Rev. R. G. MacBeth
Rev. A. C. Garrioch



A REVEREND QUARTETTE OF ANTI-RIELLITES

risively dubs him "our little Napoleon", and, still later, he believes he is smartly sneering at him when he refers to him as the "devout (?) 'President'"³³, though the Métis chief never claimed the possession of any military talent, and while, as a matter of fact, the whole Riel family were remarkable for their religious dispositions³⁴.

To the same Reverend author, his associates in Red River were only "well-fed bandits, oppressors of the people", who had set up a "reign of terror", and ultimately formed "an abominable confederacy"³⁵.

The reader who is familiar with a certain type of non-Catholic literature will have recognized in these last passages from the writings of Rev. Bryce, Mac-Beth and Young another, and still more dangerous, kind of prejudice. After that which is based on ignorance through diversity of language, as well as on racial differences, we now have that which originates in religious rancour, or the mania for "protesting" when the good name of Catholics is at stake.

This leads us to the most terrible species of prejudice, that which flows from religious fanaticism. This, needless to add, has been a most potent factor in the wilful distortion of facts to the detriment of Riel and his people. Here we fully realize that we are entering upon dangerous ground; but why undertake to write history if we are not free to reveal the true causes of animadversions as we know them?

There is in the British world a set of people an

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 128 and 134.

³⁴ Louis Riel had a sister who died a Grey Nun at Ile à la Crosse.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 114, 117, 118 and 151 respectively. How lucky (if sincere) that author must have considered himself to have escaped from the claws of the unspeakable monster!

excuse for the legal existence of whom we have always sought in vain, since even human law should carefully eschew all pretexts for fratricidal struggles and social strife. We refer to the order of Orangemen, whose object is supposedly to uphold the rights of Protestantism which nobody dreams of impugning, while in reality that society is primarily intended to coerce through intimidation and oppress such of their fellow citizens as cannot share their opinions.

The necessity for the existence of such an Order, whose history is written in letters of blood ³⁶, is

³⁶ In one single Irish country, Orangemen massacred in 1795 no less than 7,000 unarmed Catholics and burnt down 6,000 homes, rather vigorous deeds which some of their brethren would fain have imitated on our own fair Canadian soil had their number allowed it, as we can surmise by their burning the Catholic church of Oka, Quebec. And no wonder since originally they are said to have taken an oath to wade, if necessary, knee deep in the blood of Papists. And should any good Protestant or fair-minded reader deem us rather hard in our strictures on that society, we would simply ask him to ponder over the following facts.

In its article on "Orange society", Harmsworth's (very English) Encyclopedia admits that in the county of Armagh, that is in the very land of the Irish themselves, "the Orange society sought in effect to make it impossible for Roman Catholics to live". With that end in view, they stuck to every Catholic door posters with the words: To hell or to Connaught! Cromwell had then decided to park all the Irish into that last province, after he would have dispossessed them of their land.

Later on, in the XIXth. century, according to the above mentioned authority, "Orangeism was directed to the repression of the movement for Catholic emancipation". Emancipation from what? From the Penal Laws, which had been grinding down Catholics as no slaves have ever been. What were those laws, for the keeping of which Orangemen fought? The following and others of the same kind:

1st. They deprived Catholics of the right to a seat in Parliament; 2nd. they despoiled them even of the privilege of

something which no law-abiding people, nay, no good Protestant, can see. There is no dearth of ministers who will willingly denounce week after week the "iniquities of Rome" and are ever ready to "protest"

voting; 3rd. they excluded them from all civil or Government positions; 4th. they taxed them twice over until they had renounced Catholicism; 5th. they fined them £20 per month when they remained absent from the churches wherein their beliefs were derided; 6th. they forbade them to have defensive arms in their houses, to institute lawsuits, to become lawyers or physicians, to travel more than 5 miles from their homes, etc.; 7th. according to those laws, when a married woman failed to attend a Protestant church, two-thirds of her dowry were confiscated, and she could not be made the executrix of her husband's will; 8th. it became legal for any four justices of the peace to force a recusant to renounce his or her faith; if unwilling to apostatize, the party would be exiled for life, and if he or she returned home, imprisonment for life or death awaited him or her; 9th. it was made lawful for any two justices of the peace to summon any person of more than 16 years and demand an abjuration of the Catholic faith, and in case of any resistance that person's property passed to the nearest Protestant relative; 10th. Catholics were forbidden to buy land; 11th. any family of that faith had to pay £10 a month as a fine for having a Catholic teacher at home, and that teacher had himself to pay £2 per day for the crime of following his avocation; 12th. any Catholic who sent his child abroad to be educated there was also fined £100, and that child was forever deprived of the right to inherit, buy or possess land; 13th. anyone assisting at Mass was fined £60, etc., etc.

Since Orangemen objected to the removal of such disabilities on their fellow men, it follows that they stood for them, even at a time when everybody else saw how odious they were in a civilized community. Of course, times have changed; such laws would now seem an unthinkable anachronism; they are none the less in conformity with the spirit of Orangeism. Who, therefore, apart from its adepts, will deny that it is a shameful survival of a shamefully unjust fanaticism? As everywhere else, there are good men among the Orange people; what precedes shows if they are in their proper place.

against practices and tenets of Catholics, based on what these hold as clear ordinances of the Bible. Why still another cause of intestinal dissension, which can bode no good to either religion or society?

As to their pretended loyalty to the Throne, he must be very ignorant indeed who does not know that Orangemen have shown themselves loyal only to those who approve of their peculiarly narrow views. If unwilling to abet their undisguised bigotry, a king of England would have a good chance of being reminded that they are ready to "cast his crown into the Boyne", and it is still within the memory of middle-aged Canadians that, because the authorities hesitated to countenance their religious fanaticism, they noisily announced their intention to "smash Confederation to its original fragments".

Who then can wonder if modern British monarchs have spurned away their windy loyalty? When, in the summer of 1860, the Prince of Wales, who was to become that accomplished king known as Edward VII, visited Canada in the name of his august mother, he refused to go to Kingston and Belleville, because "the Orange society of those neighbourhoods insisted on receiving him with the insignia and other emblems of their order"³⁷, while at Toronto he "refused to pass under an Orange triumphal arch"³⁸.

Now let the reader carefully mark this: When Riel repelled the invaders of Assiniboia, in order to be all the better able to successfully negotiate with Canada with a view to obtaining the rights of the West, he did two notable things, which particularly shocked those

³⁷ Frank Basil Tracy, *The Tercentenary History of Canada*, p. 908.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*, p. 908.

extremists. He stopped at the frontier and turned out of the country William McDougall, who had prematurely been appointed its first Lieut.-Governor; now McDougall is said by some to have been an Orangeman³⁹. When harassed from all sides by malcontents, newcomers who several times rose against his government, he felt bound to make an example and restore peace and quiet broken by people from Portage la Prairie, he allowed Thomas Scott to be executed: but Scott was undoubtedly an Orangeman!

Is not this double circumstance sufficient in itself to account for the furious execration with which his memory has ever been pursued? When the reader couples this sectarian resentment with the various kinds of prejudice reviewed above, prejudice from ignorance of the language, prejudice from racial antagonism, prejudice from religious passions, he will have more than he needs to account for those "fables and fabrications, groundless surmises and misrepresentations" hinted at in the beginning of this chapter which, under the willing hands of some English authors, have woven around the real facts of the Red River Insurrection an impenetrable tissue of falsehoods rendering them scarcely recognizable to the unprejudiced student of history.

³⁹ Cf. Beckles Willson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal*, p. 207; London, 1915. Others, however, think he was not.

CHAPTER II

THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

Most of the circumstances which have since occasioned that perversion of truth were also the prime movers in the rising of the French people against, not their fellow English-speaking settlers, with whom they had always been, and ever remained, at peace, but against the newly arrived strangers, a lot of domineering Ontarians, and the eastern governments they were supposed to represent.

Let us first get a proper idea of the field in which the events with which we are concerned were going to develop.

The colony of Assiniboia, as it was officially called, or the Red River Settlement, as it was popularly known, was made up of a population of about 11,500 souls divided into two sections: French or Catholics, and English, generally Protestants, the former slightly predominating. The French-speaking natives were mostly halfbreeds, the number of pure French Canadians among them not being large at all, while, by the side of about 4,000 English half-breeds, there was quite a population of unmixed Scotch and Irish blood, who were the descendants of the original settlers ¹.

¹ One year after the events we are going to relate, in the fall of 1870, a census found 11,963 inhabitants in the new province, namely: 5,757 Métis, or French halfbreeds, and 4,063 English halfbreeds, without counting 578 Indians. As to religious persuasions, 6,247 Assiniboians were Catholic and 5,716 Protestant.

Before going farther and to show how well posted (!) on things Assiniboian some of those were who presumed to write on the events which this work is to relate, let us quote the ridiculous assertion of a Capt. G. Mercer Adam on the inhabitants of that country. "All told", he said, "there were not over five hundred people in the Settlement including the halfbreeds" ². There were considerably more than twenty times that number. If the inaccuracies of the English writers, especially those of a military complexion, had affected only statistics! We give this as a sample of the rest; but the reader must not expect us to deal with even the largest number of the others. Our own narrative, based on the very best of sources, will have to be taken as an implicit refutation, or at least denial, of the same.

In spite of this diversity of race — and we neglect a few Christianized Indians settled not far from the centre of the Colony — there was therein much more unity than it would seem possible at first glance. Nay, the greatest harmony reigned in the tiny State, a fact which will easily be accounted for if we remember that the immense majority of its inhabitants being of mixed blood, whether of partially French or English extraction, realized their close relationship on their mother's

² *The Canadian North-West; its History and its Troubles*, p. 198; Toronto, 1885. Nor is this all; scarcely better acquainted with the conditions prevailing in the Colony was even Col. Dennis, who was to play such a preponderant part in the first period of the troubles, in fact who was the official informant of "Governor" McDougall. Writing to his master under date 21st. of Aug., 1869, he went so far as to affirm that the French Métis constituted only "about one-fourth or one-fifth of the Settlement" (*Red River Insurrection; Hon. William McDougall's Conduct reviewed*, p. 8; Montreal, 1870).

side, no less than the practical equality of their social standing³.

There was, however, some difference in the usual avocation, or characteristics, of the two chief groups. The halfbreeds of English speech, quite a few of whom were familiar with the French language, were generally more sedentary in their habits and took more kindly to farming than those of French origin, most of whom were the great hunters of the plains, and, as such, the purveyors of venison to the other half of the community, when they did not act as guides to the whites and traders as well as "voyageurs" or canoe-men, while a few eked out a more prosaic existence by fishing on the lakes.

As there was scarcely any market for wheat, which could not be exported except, under the shape of flour and in small quantities, to the trading posts and missions of the north, and as the English-speaking section of the Colony was growing all that was needed for home and abroad consumption, the French usually limited their agricultural efforts to the cultivation, around their one-piece log houses, of one or two acres of oats for their horses, barley and peas for themselves.

With a minimum of manual labour they felt happy, and remained gay and courteous under the most trying circumstances, ever ready to oblige⁴ and have their

³ Bishop Taché, of St. Boniface, had written but a short time before: "Perhaps in no region of the world is there any greater harmony between people of different origins" (*Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique*, p. 75; Montreal, 1901).

⁴ "But last week, a respectable old man, speaking to me of those relations between the various sections of our population, was telling me: "I have been often among the French; I have but one thing against them: they have constantly endeavoured to kill me with politeness and kindness" (*Esquisse*, etc., p. 75).

full share in a dance or other social party. Mirth and pleasure were apparently the very essence of their life.

More swarthy in complexion, they were physically superior to their English compatriots. In fact, as early as 1859, a land surveyor, Simon J. Dawson, sent out to reconnoitre the region between Lake Superior and the Red River, wrote of them: "In physical appearance the halfbreeds are far superior to the races to which they are allied. Among the *habitants* of Lower Canada, they would look like giants, and they are much more robust and muscular than the surrounding Indians" ⁵.

That the explorer had in mind the Métis, or semi-French, is made plain by his reference to the farmers of Quebec and what follows that passage in his text.

Nay, a contemporary of the Red River Insurrection, contrasting the two races of halfbreeds then in the country, does not even recoil from stating that "there is a large section of the English halfbreeds who will undoubtedly sink, through idleness and other causes, into a very low situation of society, while the French are not without men of intelligence and capability in various walks of life" ⁶. Which declaration might profitably be put side by side with what all other English writers have had to say of the transcendent superiority of the Scotch over the French halfbreeds.

As to the offspring of the original immigrants from Scotland and Ireland, known as the Selkirk colonists, they were simple, honest and upright folks, with some

⁵ *Report of the Exploration of the Country between Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement*, p. 24; Toronto, 1859.

⁶ British Blue Book, p. 25. By which is meant, here and throughout the present work, the official publication entitled *Correspondence relative to the Recent Disturbances in the Red River Settlement*; London, 1870.

quaint customs, most of which were being copied by the half castes of both origins.

Whites, halfbreeds and Métis, as those of semi-French extraction were called, formed a patriarchal, law-abiding and generally God-fearing community, which was so honest that door locks were unknown among them as long as they were left to themselves — in a word some sort of American Arcadia ¹.

Unfortunately, reckless, pretentious and turbulent individuals hailing from the province of Ontario, as Upper Canada was beginning to be known, had, during the last few years, made their appearance into the hitherto isolated Settlement, and were speedily sowing the seeds of discord and discontent in that peaceful population.

¹ “In regard to social conditions of the Settlement, crime is scarcely known”, asserted explorer Dawson (*Report of the Exploration*, p. 24). That was in 1859. Shortly before the insurrection, Bishop Taché himself confirmed our own remark when he wrote: “Thieving is a vice little or not known of the Métis. As a matter of fact, it is the coming of the strangers [the “Canadians”] which forced us to put ourselves under the protection of locks and bolts” (*Esquisse*, p. 79).

At that time, buffalo hunting was still much in vogue. Among the regulations which the hunters had made to themselves, was one which attested the aversion of those people for stealing. “Any person convicted of theft, after fair trial, even though the theft might only be of a piece of buffalo sinew used in sewing moccasins or harness, was brought to the centre of the camp, in full view and hearing of all, and the ‘court crier’ called out his or her name three times, adding the word ‘thief’ with a shout on each occasion. However, honesty was practically universal among the people, and this dire punishment was hardly ever called for” (MacBeth, *Romance of Western Canada*, p. 58).

In another little work the same author has it that, in the Settlement, “the latch-string was always on the outside, and

These were called "Canadians" ⁸, and their avowed object was to do away with that patriarchal state and annex the country to the newly formed confederation — a most worthy aim which, however, was not to be achieved before an orgy of illegal aggressions, blunders of all kinds and bungling galore had stirred the population to its innermost fibres, inasmuch as, having never seen Canada, but originating directly or indirectly in Europe, even the full-blooded whites of English speech cared very little for what we now call the East.

The leader of the Canadians, and one of those among them who had been the longest in the West, was a young physician of powerful build immigrated from Ontario, John Christian Schultz, an able, enterprising and most daring, but not over-scrupulous man. Beckles Willson refers to him as "a certain obstreperous Dr. John Schultz, a Titan in stature and energy" ⁹.

The Hon. Joseph Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces of Canada, sedulously avoided his company in the course of a visit he paid the Red River Settlement just before the troubles that were already brewing, confessing that, "with a very insignificant private character", Schultz "had been assuming an absurd position", and that he kept him "at arm's length" ¹⁰.

as for locks, they were practically as much unknown as in Acadia" (*sic* for Arcadia); *The Selkirk Settlers in Real Life*, p. 51; Toronto [1897].

⁸ By contradistinction with the natives of the country who had never seen Canada. *Les Canadas* was the name given them by the Métis.

⁹ *The Life of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal*, p. 16.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 176. See also, and carefully note, the title of the book here mentioned, as B. Willson has published a smaller one on *Lord Strathcona; the Story of his Life*.

Another party, a Major James Wallace, wrote of the same in an official report: " [Howe] had held very little intercourse while there¹¹ with that party calling itself the 'Canadian party'; for he firmly believed that Schultz, Mair and Bown, with his *Nor'-wester*, had acted in a very unbecoming manner towards the halfbreeds, and he only wondered how these men were tolerated in the Settlement " ¹².

We have no wish to unnecessarily blacken the reputation of this worthy, whose after-life was to be a very apt illustration of the appropriateness of the Latin proverb *audaces fortuna juvat*, fortune favours the brave. But since he was Riel's most outspoken adversary, we must be allowed to make him known as he then was, so that the reader may form a sane opinion of the conflicts in which both of them were concerned.

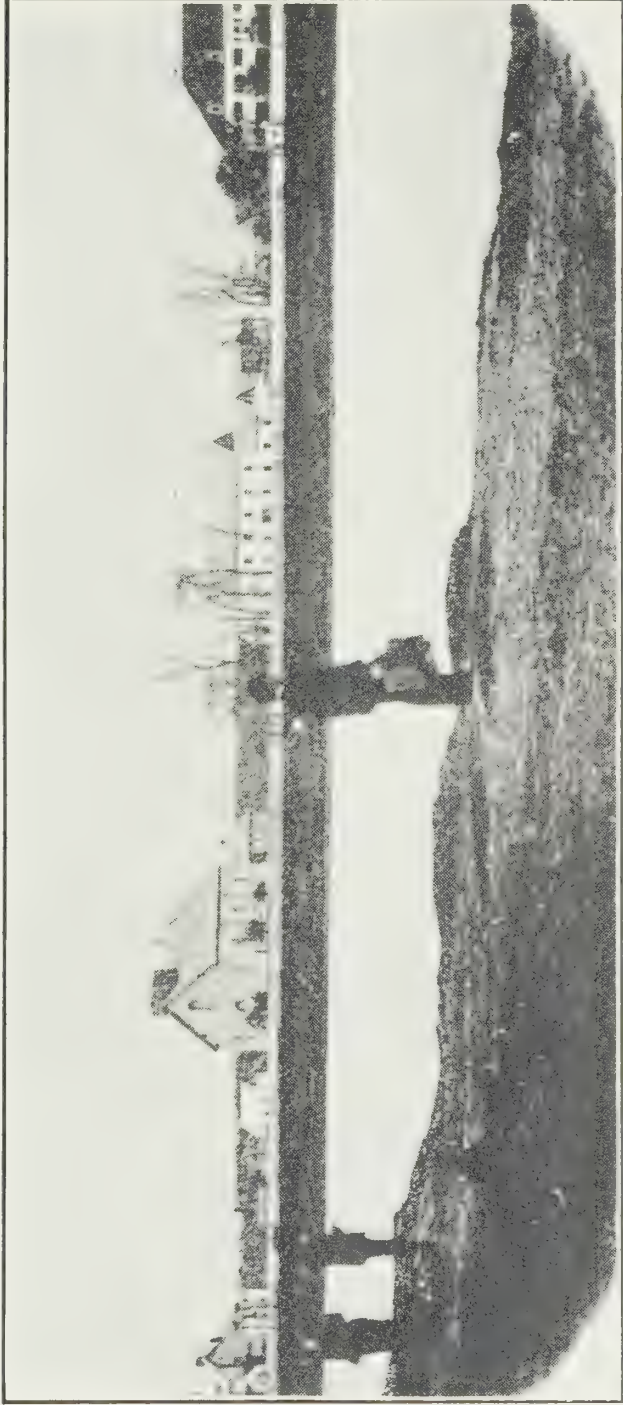
In February, 1866, an action for 300 pounds sterling having been brought against the "redoubtable doctor"¹³ the case had at first been postponed because of his absence. In the following May, he challenged the competence of the Court, which he claimed was prejudiced against him, or at any rate could not act impartially. He would not abide by the sentence which was then passed against him.

Yet so lenient were the authorities that nothing was done to enforce the same until January, 1868, when the sheriff with a posse proceeded to the trading post of Dr. Schultz, who forcibly resisted the seizure of his goods, and, in the scuffle which ensued, both sheriff and posse were ejected.

¹¹ At Red River.

¹² *Ubi suprà*, the *Life*, etc., p. 172.

¹³ Bryce, *The Rem. History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, p. 447; London, s. d.



Bishop's Palace

Cathedral

Girl's School

Convent

SAINT BONIFACE IN 1869

Having afterwards surrendered to the authorities, he endeavoured to convince them of their wrong position. But, deaf to his remonstrances, they finally consigned him to the local jail. He had not been there more than four hours when he allowed his friends to release him "after they had torn down the gaol walls and battered in the prison door" ¹⁴.

In his *Life of Lord Strathcona*, Beckles Willson, referring to a later period, has it that "the notorious Schultz [at the time of a small-pox epidemic among the Indians, scarcely two years after the events we shall relate in these pages]... took upon himself to supply this surgeon with a large quantity of brandy and rum to the value of £120. When Capt. Butler got into the country, this handsome supply of fire-water ¹⁵ had been distributed, and he found the Indians and halfbreeds, affected or otherwise, were for the most part in a brutal state of intoxication.

"Butler found it necessary personally to destroy a large quantity of this liquor, spilling it upon the ground

¹⁴ D. Gunn, *History of Manitoba*, p. 321; Ottawa, 1880. In spite of their leniency to him, so irreducibly hostile to them did he remain that, on the eve of the Red River troubles, he was the mainspring of the opposition to their government. At a public meeting he said "that many of the Hudson's Bay Company's servants, and the chairman of this meeting, could no longer throw dust in the eyes of the Canadians, who were loyal [to whom? to what?] and the settlers (the natives) would do well to be advised in time — they were facing a great danger, that would be disastrous and possibly ruin many; but the results were already seen by all loyal Canadians" (O'Donnell, *Manitoba as I saw it*, p. 26).

How kind of the leader of the strangers, if not foreigners, to warn in time the 11,500 inhabitants of the country of the dire things their handful of men were going to inflict on them!

¹⁵ On which, useless to remark, the industrious doctor must have made a handsome profit.

to the great chagrin and regret of the thirsty aborigines. As he said to Mr. Smith, 'there I go with a law passed prohibiting this thing, and, behold, only to find an officer of the Dominion using it very freely and giving it liberally to all about him' " ¹⁶.

It is but right to add that when years afterwards " Mr. (D. A.) Smith openly accused Schultz of this strange conduct ¹⁷, the latter vigorously denied it". But, as the biographer of the former, remarks, " Mr. Smith had made sure of his facts " ¹⁸.

Strange to say, the only author we know who has a kind word for Dr. Schultz is one of those belittled French Catholics he disliked so cordially, Judge L. A. Prud'homme who has it, probably from some contemporaneous Métis, that " he was a good physician and very charitable " ¹⁹.

Of Scandinavian descent, Schultz had been born in 1840 at Amherstburg, Ontario, and he had been practicing medicine ever since 1860 ²⁰, joining, in the Settlement, the career of a journalist to the profession of a doctor of medicine. In the former capacity,

¹⁶ B. Willson, *Lord Strathcona*, p. 118.

¹⁷ Which, among the aborigines, invariably occasion untold scenes of debauch, violence and cruelty.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹⁹ *Monseigneur Noël-Joseph Ritchot*, p. 58; Winnipeg, 1928.

²⁰ Schultz was evidently precocious, and there is no necessity to add to, or exaggerate, that quality which was his. The Rev. Geo. Dugas is not happy in his dates. He says not only that Riel was but 21 in 1869 (*Hist. véridique*, p. 42), though he must have known that he was born in 1844, but that Dr. Schultz was then only 22. According to the same historian, that over-active man acquired in 1864, that is at 24, the *Nor'wester* newspaper (p. 7), which he directed four years; yet he studied medicine at Queen's College, Kingston. On the other hand, we know from reliable sources that he married in 1867.

through articles in the *Nor'wester*²¹ and letters to the eastern press, he had endeavoured to create a flow of emigration from his native province to the plains of the West.

In 1867 his efforts at colonizing had resulted in the coming of a score of Ontarians, a feat which naturally rendered him all the bolder in his struggle against local authorities, that is of the Hudson's Bay Company, which he detested with all his heart. A few more were to follow later on, with, or in the wake of, the surveyors of whom we shall have much to say.

The newcomers from the East went mostly west of the Settlement properly so called, to a region sixty miles off known as Portage la Prairie, on the Assiniboine River, as well as nearer the Red to a place called Headingly, while a few Americans, who had crossed the frontier in the path of the freighters hailing from St. Paul and way points, had remained in the immediate vicinity of Fort Garry, forming with some natives of English speech the embryo of what has become Winnipeg.

As to the original English or Gaelic-speaking settlers and their descendants, they had their farms just

²¹ The great dumping place of his bile against the H. B. Co. That paper had been founded by two English Canadians, William Buckingham and William Coldwell, and was first published every fortnight, going to a few families in the Settlement in return for the sum of 12 shillings which was, in course of time, reduced to 10. Buckingham having left the country in 1860, Mr. Coldwell remained in full possession of the little sheet, which he edited in conjunction with an able half caste native, James Ross, the son of the historian of that name, who possessed a half interest in the venture. In 1864 Ross disposed of his share on behalf of Dr. Schultz who, the year thereafter, became the sole proprietor of the paper, and in 1868 sold it to a dentist called Walter Robert Bown.

north of the confluence of the two streams, close to which were most of the Scotch halfbreeds, some of whom, however, were scattered throughout the country while the main body of the Métis, or at least of those with whom this book will deal ²², occupied the other side of the Red, up and south of the same, forming the groups of St. Boniface, St. Vital, St. Norbert, or Rivière Sale, Ste. Agathe, and inland Ste. Anne des Chênes, Lorette, as well as St. François-Xavier, just above Headingly, St. Paul, still farther up, and St. Laurent, on L. Manitoba.

The Protestant population had for religious and civil centres St. John, where stood the cathedral of the Anglican bishop, St. Andrews, St. Clements and Kildonan, on the Red River, together with St. Mary's, St. Margaret's, St. Ann and St. James, on the Assiniboine.

Just close to Fort Garry, an extensive stone wall enclosure with bastions, which sheltered quite a number of buildings for trading, storing and residential purposes, were to be seen some twenty-five houses, put up with scarcely an eye for symmetry or regularity, except along what was then called Main Road, few of which served exclusively as residences.

There were five stores, two hotels and one saloon, a butcher shop occupied by the only French Canadian in the place ²³, a large public hall and block, one mill, the post-office and a little church, Holy Trinity. This was Winnipeg.

Humbler still was St. Boniface, just across the

²² For there were many other groups of Métis in the West, for instance those of L. Manitoba and those of the Qu'Appelle valley, in what is now the province of Saskatchewan.

²³ A. Henri Coutu, the name of whom will appear again in our narrative.

Red. It consisted of the Catholic cathedral, a rather modest edifice with its tower unfinished, which replaced the church "with the turrets twain" sung by Whittier²⁴, yet solidly built of stone as was the bishop's palace immediately to the east of it. Then there was the Grey Nuns convent, a somewhat more pretentious building still extant in its essential parts, as the adjoining girls' school and even the College²⁵, not far off.

To the north of the cathedral, near what we now call Provencher bridge, stood the humble home of a Métis and a boarding-house kept by a French Canadian, while the site of the present hospital was occupied by two private residences, and another, that of a Victor Mager, a Frenchman who was to live till 1930, stood just opposite the mouth of the Assiniboine.

In Winnipeg, the most important building seems to have been the Ermatinger hotel, in the possession of a German whose sister was to marry above mentioned Victor Mager. This was situated a short distance north of what we now call the corner of Portage and Main, on the west side of the latter.

Then there were the post-office block, on a road leading from Main street to the river, in the vicinity of what is to-day Bannatyne East, and another fairly large edifice was the Red River Hall, just opposite the end of Portage avenue on Main street, while, from a business standpoint, the store of the Hudson's Bay Co., distinct from that of the fort, and that of Bannatyne

²⁴ Cf. "The Red River Voyageur", Appendix C of our *History of the Catholic Church*.

²⁵ The building which some time ago sheltered the Carmelite nuns.

& Begg were the chief commercial places of the village ²⁶.

The seat of the civil government was at Fort Garry, which, from a political and material point of view, was the centre as well as the capital of the Colony. Considered as a municipality, or territory more directly under its control, Assiniboia radiated on every side fifty miles from the fort, leaving out some places or minor settlements, such as Portage la Prairie, on the Assiniboine, and St. Laurent, on Lake Manitoba, which were indeed under the jurisdiction of the Hudson's Bay Co. even as regards civil rights, but did not belong to the little commonwealth which went by the name of Red River Settlement.

A word or two on the history of the country will make it more easy for the reader to understand the conditions of the Colony, even such as they were at the beginning of the troubles we are going to study.

The country had been discovered by Frenchmen led by a noble character, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de Lavérendrye, who first reached the confluence of the Assiniboine on the 24th. of September, 1738, and that same fall erected a trading post at a place on that stream whence the Indians bound for L. Manitoba used to carry ²⁷ their birch bark canoes over land. This was Fort la Reine, the headquarters of the explorer, where is now Portage la Prairie ²⁸, without counting Fort Rouge, at what is to-day Winnipeg, and Fort Maurepas, near the lake of the same name, etc.

²⁶ The McDermot family was already conspicuous in Winnipeg, but more from the buildings it occupied than from a business standpoint.

²⁷ French *porter*; hence *portage*, the act or place of carrying.

²⁸ As if one would say "Over the Prairie Carrying".

The French occupied the country till the cession of Canada to the British (1763). It is therefore scarcely to be wondered at if, because of their title of pioneers, people of that race have ever felt at home on the western plains, inasmuch as, through intermarriage with Indian women, their own kin became the progenitors of that vigorous population which goes by the name of Métis.

French was the first European language not only spoken in the West, but learnt by western aborigines²⁹; the first plot of land cultivated and the first wheat grown there were cultivated and grown by Frenchmen at a spot in the Saskatchewan valley, before any person of British extraction had set foot on its soil³⁰; the first minister of any denomination to work there was a priest from old France³¹; the first church of any kind was built by French Canadians at what is now St. Boniface, for a French clergyman, Fr. Norbert Provencher, who started there the first school for boys and established the first college, after which he founded the first school for girls under a Miss A. Nolin, daughter of a French fur-trader.

Speaking of ladies reminds us that the very first white woman who, not only saw the virgin prairies of the West but lived there quite a long time, scoured their immensities from east to west (Pembina to Edmonton) and reared a number of children on the

²⁹ "I have seen French guns among the natives that come to York-fort, and once heard Mr. Brady, the surgeon, converse with one of them in the French language" (*An Account of Six Years' Residence in Hudson's Bay*, p. 62; London, 1752).

³⁰ This was under the Chevalier de la Corne, the last of the French Governors (1754).

³¹ And the first resident missionary was the Rev. Claude Godefroy Coquart, S. J.

plains³² was Marie-Anne Gaboury, the courageous wife of Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière, who came west in 1807 and died at St. Boniface at the age of 96.

These are so many points of honourable priority which the French in Western Canada have always regarded as giving them at least equal rights on the western plains with those of any other white people.

Under the British regime the descendants of the early French, or their compatriots, identified themselves with the Scotch-Canadian fur-trading company of the North-West, a rival of the Hudson's Bay Company which, after having had to suffer at the hands of the former, ultimately won the day by absorbing it (1821).

This amalgamation took place five years after a bloody encounter, that of Seven Oaks, which its people had with the Nor'Westers, who momentarily destroyed the nucleus of a settlement which was to develop into the modern province of Manitoba.

This settlement had been founded in 1812 by a noble and philanthropic lord, Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk, who put it under the direction of a Catholic gentleman, Capt. Miles Macdonell³³, whose reign was followed by that of eleven governors, culminating in a William Mactavish, the last of them all.

Theoretically, all power was vested in the Hudson's Bay Company, whose charter granted it sovereign rights and jurisdiction, subject only to the Imperial Government in London. Its head in the West was supreme, even in purely civil affairs; but under him there was another officer called the Governor of Assiniboia, assisted by a council the members of which

³² One of whom was to become Riel's mother.

³³ Concerning whom see our *The Macdonell Family in Canada*; Toronto, 1929.

were appointed by the same corporation. Especially since 1850, these were truly representative of the whole Colony, Catholic and Protestant, French and English, white and halfbreed.

It is but right to remark that things were not quite so in the beginning, and that it required an uprising of the Métis in 1849 to snatch from the Company not only the practical abrogation of their fur monopoly, but the right of all the classes of society to representation in the governing body.

This outbreak was headed by Louis Riel the elder³⁴. Although it resulted in no written concession, Métis and even natural enemies, or at least competitors, of the Hudson's Bay Company, such as Andrew McDermot and Andrew Graham Ballenten Bannatyne, were in the course of time admitted into the privileged class of Assiniboia Councillors. The following list of those of the very last years of the Council will show to what extent they represented the various sections of the population.

Chief Factor (the highest grade in the hierarchy of the members of the Company in America) William Mactavish, Governor of Assiniboia since December 9, 1858 and Governor of Rupert's Land since 1865. Though born in Scotland, he was an Anglican, a quiet and upright man married to a Catholic lady.

The (Anglican) Lord Bishop of Rupert's Land (Robert Machrea) and

Rt. Rev. (Catholic) Bishop Alexandre Antonin Taché, of St. Boniface, two most honourable clergymen at the head of the two chief religious denominations of the Settlement.

³⁴ At first called Louis l'Irlande and then Louis Rielle, in the records of the Council of Assiniboia.

John Black, recorder or chief justice, a greatly respected layman and an Anglican from Scotland.

William Cowan, M. D., a Scotch Anglican in the charge of Fort Garry in 1869 ³⁵.

John Inkster, a native of the Orkney Islands, and a Presbyterian, the father of the late sheriff of the same name who was born in the Settlement.

Robert MacBeth ³⁶, the father of Rev. Mr. MacBeth, likewise a native of the Colony and the first Assiniboian to be promoted to the rank of councillor (March 29, 1853). A Presbyterian.

Maximilien Genton (or Genthon), a French Canadian born in Lower Canada in 1790, therefore old enough to counsel wisely. A Catholic.

A. G. B. Bannantyne, a prominent merchant after whom one of Winnipeg's streets is named. Born in the Orkney Islands, he was a Presbyterian and became the first postmaster of Winnipeg.

Henry Fisher was a Catholic halfbreed.

Thomas Sinclair, a Councillor since 1853, was an Anglican halfbreed.

Roger Goulet was a French halfbreed born in the Catholic Church.

J. Curtis Bird, an English doctor of medicine ³⁷, was an Anglican.

³⁵ A graduate in medicine of the University of Glasgow, who was to retire from the service of the H. B. Co. after the Troubles. "He was an excellent conversationalist, and possessed with a fund of a quiet wit" (O'Donnell, *Manitoba as I saw it*, p. 110; Toronto, [1910].

³⁶ Name also spelt McBeth or even MacBeath in various documents.

³⁷ V. the very end of Chapter X.

Salomon Hamelin, whose name is generally misspelt in the records ³⁸, was born in Red River in 1810. A Métis and a Catholic, as was also

Pascal Breland, a lovable type of the old generation halfbreeds, who had been appointed in 1857.

James McKay, a Scotch halfbreed, at first a Presbyterian and then a Catholic ³⁹.

William Dease, who was considered a French halfbreed despite his name, was the son of explorer Dease, and was to become the leader of the French neutrals in the Riel troubles. A Catholic.

Thomas Bunn, a halfbreed Anglican.

Magnus Berston, or Bersten, a Catholic halfbreed whose father was an Orkneyman. He resided in St. François-Xavier.

John Sutherland, a Presbyterian native of Scotland, who was to become a senator.

William Fraser, or Frazer, the son of a Selkirk Colonist and a Presbyterian.

Under and, as we have seen, with the active co-operation of those councillors, there was a regular judiciary system; customs duties of 4% were levied by official collectors; other functionaries looked after the making and upkeep of the roads; in short, Assiniboia was endowed with practically all the machinery necessary to the good administration of a civilized community.

³⁸ Generally Amlin, but also Emlin, Omlin, Hamlin and Hemlin, nay even Elmin. V. ill. p. 240.

³⁹ As such a great personal friend of Bishop Taché. He possessed for a time the Silver Heights property, near Winnipeg, and his daughter (whom we have quite well known) was the very first inmate of St. Mary's Academy, before she married a Mr. Gagnon.

Two things only were wanting: the determination to see to the strict enforcement of the laws and regulations enacted by the Council and the material means to secure that enforcement.

So far good-will and a strong sense of duty had stood in place of that force which is often required to obtain obedience. Nevertheless in September, 1846, British troops to the number of 500—ten times more than needed—had been stationed in the Settlement; but these had remained only two years, and had been replaced by 140 pensioners who must have been “retired” indeed, as their services were scarcely ever brought into requisition, the authorities preferring the sanction of conscience to the constraint of physical force.

With the advent of the Canadians from the East, this Arcadian simplicity had become unequal to the task of effectively dealing with offenders. Yet those in power had not altered their patriarchal ways. So much so, indeed, that, as we have seen, even jail-breakings had remained unpunished, and things had come to such a pass that the Government of the Hudson’s Bay Company was now regarded as not only feeble, but obsolete and ineffective — others said moribund.

What could be done with new-comers who despised as antiquated the administration of justice in the country, with strangers who missed in the tranquil Settlement the excitement of elections, apart from the recourse to force in the cases of law-breaking ⁴⁰?

⁴⁰ We will see towards the end of this volume whether they knew how to create some when they ultimately had the field to themselves.

Two reasons militated against these operations. They would have been a source of expense to the Company itself, which was already burdened with other charges, and then there was in the air an atmosphere of political unsteadiness and suspense which worked against over-exertion.

With regard to the first point, expenses, it must be kept in mind that Assiniboia was one of those rare lands where taxes are unknown. There were in the colony but two officials, the Governor and the Recorder, or Chief Justice, who received salaries worth mentioning, and these were paid by the Company. It must be admitted in passing that, with regard to the latter, this financial dependence put it in a rather delicate position whenever its employees were themselves concerned in a lawsuit.

The small salaries of the other officials⁴¹ were derived from the duty on importations, from the granting of special licences, such as that on spirit distilling, as well as from occasional fines.

As to the feeling of unsteadiness we have referred to, we find an echo of it in the following passage of a well-known book by Mgr. Taché, of St. Boniface:

“In the Colony itself, there is some agitation and worry with regard to the future. Some, very few in numbers, who hope to gain by any change, clamour for it; others, who mind more systems than the application of them, would fain try a change, forgetting that people do not return to the primitive state they have abandoned; most of them, the majority, strongly apprehend that change. Many are quite right: those modifications may benefit the country; it will no doubt

⁴¹ From five to twelve pounds per annum.

acquire many advantages which it lacks, but the present population will certainly lose by them. As we love the people more than the land they occupy, as we prefer the happiness of the former to the splendour of the latter, we must repeat what we have already said: we fear very much for our population some of the changes which are promised them " ⁴².

⁴² *Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique*, p. 54 ; Montreal reprint.

CHAPTER III

CAUSES OF THE INSURRECTION

Such was the battlefield where was to take place the clash between the interests of the incoming Canadians and those of most of the natives, whites and half-breeds, of the country, the struggle as a result of which the political aspirations of the former were soon to be realized, indeed, but not entirely in their own way, thanks to the action (which we are to expose in the course of these pages) chiefly of the French part of the original population.

After a short period of indifference on that score ¹, the Government of the Canadian Confederation had decided to acquire the immense stretch of land extending from the western confines of Ontario to the Rocky Mountains, and, with that end in view, Sir Georges Etienne Cartier and Hon. William McDougall had been deputed to go to London ², to negotiate the annexation to Canada of that territory of which the Red River Settlement was but an infinitesimal part and all of which belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company.

After long parleys and much correspondence, in the

¹ "In September, 1868, except Mr. Tilley and myself, every member of the Government was either indifferent or hostile to the acquisition of the North-West Territories" (W. McDougall to Joseph Howe, *ap. B. Willson, The Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 157).

² By an Order in Council dated 1st. Oct., 1868.

course of which the beaver lords had shown themselves very keen bargainers³, it had been agreed that Assiniboia and the North-West Territory would be turned over to the new confederation for the consideration of £300.000 sterling and some landed advantages, which would accrue to the fur-trading corporation on the day of the transfer of the country. On the 20th. of August, 1869, this transfer had been fixed for the following 1st. of December, after it had originally been set for the 1st. of October⁴.

So far the politicians and traders. What about the settlers and natives of the country themselves? Their fate had been decided on without their having as much as been told of it, let alone consulted about it. Here is the crucial point, for which we bespeak the greatest attention on the part of the English reader, if he wishes at all to understand what was to follow.

Because of their different social position and prospects in life, while the new-comers, or Canadians, were longing for the prompt realization of these plans, in fact were loudly demanding it, the natives of Assiniboia did not look at them with the same eye. The English-speaking settlers, without being enthusiastic over the matter, wounded as they felt in their pride at having been sold out as a herd of cattle — to use their own expression — were not, as a rule, absolutely averse to trying the new conditions, knowing in advance that, while they could derive some material advantages

³ They at first wanted £1.000.000 in cash, 6.000 acres of land round their forts retained as their own property, a free grant of 5.000 other acres "whenever the Government shall have sold, leased, granted or otherwise parted with 50.000 acres", etc. (*Cf.* Sessional Papers No. 25, p. 8).

⁴ *Cf.* the British Blue Book (*Correspondence relative to the Recent Disturbances, etc.*), p. 1.

from them, they were in no danger of losing anything in the line of what is to civilized man more than gold: his language and his religion.

This, let it be proclaimed and ever remembered, was *not* the case with the French population. At the risk of running counter to the possible self-complacency of some readers, we must distinctly remind them that, through tradition and the testimony of their elders, the French of Assiniboia were well aware of the fact that their race in America had scarcely ever met with fairness at the hands of people of English speech, as far as went the enjoyment of their language and the full practice of their religion, one of the component parts of which is the education of children according to the dictates of conscience.

This will perhaps surprise those who are not quite familiar with the history of, for instance, the province of Quebec, inasmuch as that history is generally put forth as a proof of British forbearance and generosity ⁵.

⁵ "The dread of interference with their religion, at least, was an unfounded one, as French Catholics who had had experience of English toleration in the Province of Quebec might have been assured" (G. M. Adam, *The Canadian North-West*, pp. 192-93; Toronto, 1885). The French of Quebec can indeed be pointed out as models of toleration to the English of all the other provinces, who, whenever they can, even in the teeth of a provincial constitution, refuse to Catholics the right to educate their children according to their own conscience, and force them to pay for schools which they cannot use, while in Quebec Catholics allow that privilege even to the infinitesimal Jewish minority of their province!

That same mistaken idea of the English Canadians we find in a book published but last year, wherein the Rev. A. C. Garrioch has it that "the unswerving loyalty of the Province of Quebec to British rule in Canada is a fine tribute of respect and confidence in the fairness and beneficence of that rule" (*The*

We make bold to assert at the start that if to-day Quebec enjoys religious liberty and the free use of the ancestral idiom, this is simply because the invaders could not alter either, not because they would not. The British authorities and new-comers did all that could humanly speaking be done, short of bloody persecution, to deprive of the one and the other the original population of that country ⁶. They failed in their shrewd and persistent attempts because of the steadfastness, if not pugnaciousness, of the French Canadians.

This should be known to every non-partisan historian. Those of our readers who may not be aware of it have only to be referred to the pages not of Garneau or Ferland, but of all veracious English histories

Correction Line, p. 294). We beg to assure the Rev. gentleman that he is quite wide of the mark in his diagnostic. There is not one well-educated man or woman in that province who does not remember, feel and resent what the English did to humble and put down his or her race, until the time when they saw that it was useless, and that they had to consent to what they could not prevent. The one and only cause of the present day French Canadians being faithful to the British connection is not far to seek, nor should it surprise our venerable friend if he really knows one of the characteristics of that denomination against which he protests: respect for constituted authority. French Canadians are attached to the British rule simply because they are... Catholics. — This was written before Mr. Garrioch's death.

⁶ "Mistress of the French colonies, England commences by deporting the Acadians; then, in spite of the treaties, she will try, during a century, to force on the French Canadians her language, her laws, her schools and her religion" (Mr. Hébert, *L'Histoire de la Population canadienne-française*, ap. "Le Canada français, vol. XXII, No. 4, p. 382). This remark, which has just appeared in a French Canadian periodical, shows whether Garrioch was right in his assertion.

of Canada. To mention but one, let us choose one of the latest, F. B. Tracy's *Tercentenary* in three volumes. Therein we will see, to commence by the beginning, that, even under the regime of the first British governor, Murray, who certainly was not without his good qualities, throughout the length and breadth of the colony "the judges were Britons" who could not understand the accused or the pleading of their lawyers⁷, and that of the British incomers, "there were only a few hundreds of them at first, but they assumed full authority" to the exclusion of the French⁸.

Yet even then Murray, whose fairness was so resented that he was recalled by the home bureaucrats, was himself singing the praises of those who were so ignominiously ignored in the government of their own country. "I glory", he wrote after his recall, "of having been accused of warmth and firmness in protecting the king's Canadian subjects, and of doing my utmost to give to my royal master the affections of that brave, hardy people, whose emigration⁹, if it ever shall happen, will be an irreparable loss to his empire, to prevent which I declare to Your Lordship¹⁰ I would willingly submit to greater calumnies

⁷ Tracy, *The Tercentenary History of Canada*, p. 573; Toronto, 1908.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 574. Murray observed in a letter that the only people in Canada who were not Catholics were "four hundred and fifty contemptible sutlers and traders" (*Ap. "The Canadian Historical Review"*, vol. XV, No. 4, p. 363).

⁹ A hint which undoubtedly betrays the fact that there must have been in high places a talk of treating the Canadians as the Acadians had been treated.

¹⁰ The Earl of Shelburne.

and iniquities, if greater can be devised, than hitherto I have undergone " ¹¹.

When Carleton came, " he saw that one great source of trouble was the selfishness of the small body of English residents ¹²; that the unrest on the part of the French proceeded largely from the aggressions of the English " — which could be said word for word of what was to happen in Assiniboia! Were not those of the same race at Red River warranted in apprehending a repetition of such conditions in their distant domain?

Francis Mazères, one of the principal officers of the Crown in the Canada of the earlier British regime, was a Huguenot, " a very bitter anti-Catholic, and not in favour of allowing the Roman Catholics any share whatever in the government " ¹³. The people of the same religious persuasion in the West were threatened with having a Mazères of their own in the person of their forthcoming governor, William McDougall, who passed for being almost as anti-Catholic as one could be.

Time went on in the East without bettering the conditions of the French Catholics, though the English were still but a negligible minority. Twenty years after the Cession that " element in Canada was narrow in the extreme, and from the start arrogated to itself the control and rule " of people it did not even understand ¹⁴. When in 1790 their commonwealth was divided into two distinct parts, the Englishman from Quebec who had been instrumental in securing the

¹¹ Tracy, *History*, p. 576.

¹² Which was to have its perfect counterpart on the banks of the Red.

¹³ Tracy, *op. cit.*, p. 579.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 656.



Gen. MURRAY,
First British Governor of Canada

division and was the spokesman of the English minority wanted, even for Lower Canada, which was almost exclusively French, "a representative House of Assembly, but wished the matter to be so arranged that the English, although greatly in the minority of population, should always have a majority in the Assembly" ¹⁵.

Then we all know of the clause of the 1791 Act concerning the "Clergy Reserves", whereby Catholics were forced to financially support their religious adversaries, in other words, to pay them for endeavouring to destroy their own denomination. We likewise know of the efforts made by the English to "establish the Protestant Church in Canada" ¹⁶, to the exclusion of that of the people; of the refusal of their authorities to recognize the Catholic Bishop of Quebec, a post long antedating their own coming into the country, or to allow of the setting up a regular hierarchy even long after the time had been ripe for it; of the interference

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 664.

¹⁶ "And to the End that the Church of England may be established both in Principles and Practice, and that the said Inhabitants [of Canada] may by Degrees be induced to embrace the Protestant Religion, and their Children be brought up in the Principles of it, We do hereby declare it to be Our Intention, when the said Province shall have been accurately surveyed, and divided into Townships, Districts, Precincts or Parishes, in such manner as shall be after directed, all possible Encouragement shall be given to the erecting Protestant Schools in the said Districts, Townships and Precincts, by settling, appointing and allotting proper Quantities of Land for that Purpose, and also for a Glebe and Maintainance for a Protestant Minister and Protestant School-Masters; and you are to consider and report to Us, by our Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, by what other Means the Protestant Religion may be promoted, established and encouraged in Our Province, under Your Government" (Art. 33 of the directions sent to Gen. Murray in 1763).

of the same in the affairs of the Sulpicians; of their War Department, kept up mostly by Catholics, building the Anglican cathedral of Quebec (1804).

Nay, as late as 1810, forty years after the Conquest, the judges, even in Lower Canada "were all Englishmen, being appointed by the Crown and allowed to hold office in the Assembly by virtue of their position as judges"¹⁷, despite the protests of that same body that the Bench should have nothing to do with politics. The English are wont to boast of their fair play; for most of their French fellow subjects, that fair play is at times more or less mythical. The Manitoba school question should suffice to excuse them for holding to their scepticism on that score.

With these and similar points of history fresh in their minds, above all, with a clear remembrance of the way the Acadians had been snatched from their homes, the wife from the arms of her husband and the children from the knees of their parents, and dispersed to the four winds, was it surprising that the French of Assiniboia looked askance at the prospect of being delivered helpless and without any previous agreement, to the tender mercies of the same English from the East?

Even one of their natural enemies, since he was one of the later day writers on the Red River troubles, cannot help admitting that "the attitude of the French halfbreeds is... to some extent reasonable". This is not over generous, to be sure; but too often you must be satisfied with scant justice when it is a question of the Métis¹⁸.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 690.

¹⁸ *The Canadian North-West ; its History of its Troubles*, p. 194; Toronto, 1885.

Under those conditions, do not those authors who self-complacently pity the "ignorance" of the poor Métis show themselves the more ignorant of the two sets of people¹⁹? In view of what we know of the

¹⁹ The rank and file of Riel's followers were "ignorant, easily imposed upon by superior minds", declares Mr. MacBeth in his *Romance of Western Canada*, where he is so often romancing (p. 111). Another preacher, the Rev. Geo. Young, asserts that they were "uneducated and unsuspecting", (*Manitoba Memories*, p. 193). To another writer of the same cloth, they were "confiding and credulous enough to invite exploitation by the unscrupulous" (Garrioch, *First Furrows*, pp. 197-98). Yet neither Schultz nor McDougall could exploit them. Doctors of Laws were rare amongst them, but in place of book knowledge they were possessed of a plentiful stock of good common sense, which they usually hid under a layer of naiveté which deceived the English, themselves too ignorant to be able to converse with them.

A non-clerical writer, H. A. Kennedy, is none the less still more explicit, dubbing them "ignorant people" because, forsooth, "they thought that their farms were going to be taken away from them", when they saw "strangers running lines across the land" (*The Book of the West*, p. 89; Toronto, 1925). Who, ignorant or not, could have thought otherwise? See, chapter XVII, text with reference to note 31, what the English did to their farms on the R. aux Ilets de Bois. As to Huyshe, who tried to unite in his person those incompatible professions of a soldier and an historian, he calls them "the poor ignorant French halfbreeds, who had been misled by their priests for political reasons" (*The Red River Expedition*, p. 5; London, 1871). The good man would have been rather embarrassed if asked by one of those terrible priests, the bugbear of Protestants, even soldiers, to produce a single case of wilful deceiving.)

Another lay author, who shows himself even less fair and who was a brother in arms of his, since an ex-captain, D. G. Adam (*Life of Sir John Macdonald*, p. 353; London, 1892), naively believes them to have been "steeped in ignorance and ready to follow any clever demagogue who could work upon

illegal²⁰ abolition of the separate schools of Manitoba and of the official use of French in that province, especially when we remember the brazen lies and broken promises which made that abolition possible, we should be able to gauge the degree of appropriateness there is in, for instance, Rev. MacBeth's contention that "Riel and his men were starting to fight the shadows of events which might never come"²¹.

Bearing in mind the unjust treatment by the British of the original inhabitants of Eastern Canada, and remembering that whatever liberties the province of Quebec now enjoys had to be snatched by hook or crook from the former, though the oppressed formed the immense majority of the people, how can an author who is not "ignorant", write as MacBeth does that the French of Assiniboia, who were expected to be soon thrown into the minority, "should have known

their fears or prejudice". Was there anyone in the West more of a demagogue than Dr. Schultz, whose hand was so often lifted against authority? What influence did he wield over them? As to that blissful ignorance of which we hear so much, the Métis knew many things on which the minds of their traducers was a blank. They were familiar with at least two languages, French and Cree, which their contempters did not know, and sometimes English as well, without counting at times some other native idioms. They knew in a practical way more of natural history, nay of astronomy, than some of those who tried to belittle them. Their power of observation allowed them to find their way, at a distance from home, where their critics would have been hopelessly lost, etc.

²⁰ Illegal, since an inferior authority has no power to undo what a superior one has done.

²¹ *Ubi supra* (*The Romance*), p. 100, reproduced from *The Making of the Canadian West* by the same, p. 37.

that no act of robbery ²², or deprivation of rights ²³, had ever been permitted ultimately by the flag under whose folds they were to be governed " ²⁴?

Once again, what of the Manitoba school question, whose existence had been made impossible in advance by a text from a higher authority as plain, as explicit as possible?

We would have to admit that MacBeth and those other English writers who can see no sufficient cause for the Riel rising are right if the precursors of those who were going to come from Canada had not by their very acts, which all historians feel bound to stigmatize, endeavoured to give the lie to the contentions of those authors. Nothing is more easy than to accumulate fact upon fact authorizing the natives of Red River to put a stop to the perpetration of such deeds, even though most of them were nothing else than "poor ignorant halfbreeds".

In the first place, without having ever been consulted, they were disposed of and their country sold out to another commonwealth which was in the possession of entirely different political institutions. That in-

²² What of the transplanting of English and Scotch Protestants into lands lawfully belonging to the Irish of the North thereby reduced to mendicity, the expulsion and deportation of the Acadians and the confiscation of their farms on behalf of English families still occupying them, and, just at our door, the dispossession of the Métis of the Islets de Bois river by Protestant English who have remained there? We wonder where that man learnt his history.

²³ What of the abrogation of the Catholic schools of our own Manitoba secured by the plainest of contracts? V. chapter on "Protestant Promises" and paragraph on "All Compacts broken" in that sterling Englishman Ewart's book *The Manitoba School Question*, pp. 392 and 400.

²⁴ *Ubi supra*, p. 100.

justice is not only admitted, but pointed out by most authors, as in itself a valid cause for resentment against such as were responsible for it. In the words of Capt. Huyshe, who came west to fight the Métis of Red River, "it cannot be a matter of wonder to any impartial person that they... objected to be transformed from a Crown colony to 'a colony of a colony', and handed over to the Dominion *bon gré mal gré* like so many head of cattle" ²⁵.

And yet we make bold most emphatically to declare that such a consideration, though entertained by the natives of English origin, was practically overlooked by those of French descent. This was merely a matter of sentiment and wounded pride; the French were prompted by higher considerations when they rose in arms. They were fighting for dear life, considered from a political standpoint.

For let it be remembered that the latter were not the only people in the Settlement to be discontented. The settlers of English or Scottish parentage, whites and halfbreeds, "felt that they had been treated none too courteously by the Canadian Government", writes the Rev. A. G. Garrioch ²⁶.

Then there was the truly amazing lack of tact on the part of the Ottawa authorities in appointing as governor of the new domain a man who had been represented by one of his own colleagues in the Federal Cabinet as being "unpopular in Canada" ²⁷; a cold, autocratic individual who had the reputation of being anti-Catholic and therefore anti-French. And that same autocrat, who knew nothing of Assiniboia though ever

²⁵ *The Red River Expedition*, p. 4.

²⁶ *First Furrows*, p. 200.

²⁷ B. Willson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 172.

interested in the West²⁸, was coming in advance of time with an almost ready-made government²⁹ the members of which probably knew still less about it!

And, thirdly, the same unbidden importation was accompanied by three hundred Enfield rifles and plenty of ammunition for the use of those new-comers whose attitude had already given such a bad opinion of the Canadians. These arms, thought McDougall, would immediately check any show of resistance among the Métis. In this, however, he was sadly mistaken and, in Tuttle's estimation, this evidenced "the same want of wisdom displayed throughout the whole negotiations for the transfer. Instead of Mr. McDougall's three hundred rifles frightening the French halfbreeds, they only made them more determined not to permit the Canadians to enter Assiniboia and set up a new

²⁸ He it was who, in the course of the first session of the Canadian Parliament, had (14 Dec., 1867) brought in a series of resolutions relating directly to the acquisition of Rupert's Land (or Assiniboia) and the great North-West (*Cf.* B. Willson, *The Great Company*, vol. II, pp. 228-29).

²⁹ Composed of A. N. Richards, Attorney General; J. A. N. Provencher, Territorial Secretary, and Capt. Cameron, as some sort of Minister of Militia. A contemporaneous contributor to the *Daily Press*, of St. Paul, is still more explicit on the contemplated members of McDougall's cabinet. Of the most boisterous of them he writes (No. of Nov. 21, 1869), that among his future "law manufacturers" is found a "Capt. Cameron... a poor fellow who has almost lost his brains [and who] proposes to put himself at the head of 400 Canadians... to penetrate into the territory as far as L. Winnipeg"!

Here is now, according to the same informant the composition of that famous imported cabinet: "His Excellency William McDougall, Governor; ... Capt. Cameron, member of the Council and Penetrator; ... Dr. Jackes, Adviser and Pill Administrator", etc. (*Cf.* The British Blue Book, 1870, p. 76).

government until they (the halfbreeds) had been consulted in the matter and guarantees given that their rights would be respected" ³⁰, and not trampled under foot as had been those of the original population of Quebec.

Then there was a fourth, and even more important or at least more pressing, reason for the Red River Insurrection, a cause which absolutely all the authors have to admit, more or less grudgingly, but none the less explicitly. This unanimity will free us from the necessity of quoting from them as we have done in the foregoing pages. Several of the lately arrived Canadians, after having intoxicated the Indians, made them sign deeds whereby most valuable tracts of land in and around Oak Point, on which French halfbreeds were already settled and to which the same Indians had no manner of right, were surrendered to the strangers from Ontario.

Even Dr. Geo. Bryce cannot help admitting those abuses. But he almost condones them when he writes that they turned aside from their normal avocation, surveying or road-making, "to claim unoccupied lands, to sow the seed of doubt and suspicions in the minds of a people hitherto secluded from the world... It cannot be denied, in addition, that the course of a few prominent leaders, who had made an illegitimate use of the *Nor'wester* newspaper, had tended to keep the community in a state of alienation and turmoil" ³¹.

Contemporary authors and Protestants on their oath are agreed that those strangers did not confine their

³⁰ Gunn and Tuttle, *History of Manitoba*, pp. 337-38; Ottawa, 1880.

³¹ *Rem. Hist. of the Hudson's Bay Co.*, pp. 458-59.

covetousness to "unoccupied" lands³². Moreover those parties were constantly hinting at the eviction of the rightful owners of the land, which would result as a matter of course from the transaction under consideration in London. "It is a well-known fact that the man³³ who professed to be the leader of the party openly declared that the halfbreeds of Red River would have to give way before Canadians, and that the country would never succeed until they were displaced altogether"³⁴.

The Métis who, through their mothers, had the very best title to the land and were passionately attached to it, were to be ousted, and might esteem themselves fortunate if the forthcoming Ontarians would condescend to retain them as cart-drivers.

No wonder, therefore, if the secretary of the Council of Assiniboia should have later on declared on oath that "it was very generally believed or apprehended among the people, but to a greater extent among the French halfbreeds, that the whole country would be appropriated or monopolized by the new-comers"³⁵. "I myself shared that apprehension", added the said secretary, who was not French.

And one of the most prominent gentlemen of Fort

³² See, for instance, Begg's *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 21; A. G. B. Bannatyne in *Rep. Select Committee*; Ottawa, 1874 (the Canadian Blue Book, p. 123); John H. Mactavish, *ibid.*, p. 1; Memorandum, p. 5 of the British Blue Book; Tuttle in Gunn's *History of Manitoba*, p. 339; Boulton, *Reminiscences*, p. 59; Robt. Machrea, *Life of Robert Machrea*, p. 170 ("People saw them at work 'running lines' and taking measurements in and about their fields with what seemed an absolute disregard of existing old time divisions and boundaries of their farms"), etc.

³³ Schultz.

³⁴ Begg, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

³⁵ *Rep. Select. Committee*, p. 115.

Garry likewise remarked in his own testimony: "The English also felt that the surveys were improper" ³⁶, because conducted on land not under the jurisdiction of the Government by whose orders they were made, and also because they affected estates already occupied.

This ought surely to suffice to convince the most sceptical. One more testimony, always from a Protestant, will close our list for the present. Mr. Geo. Stewart, the historian of the *Administration of the Earl of Dufferin*, writes as follows: "The overbearing conduct of some of these [Canadian] persons, and the injudicious speeches and movements of the others, very speedily provoked the hostility and aroused the fears of the settlers. . .

"It was said that the plots of ground where some of them [Métis] had lived and reared families for fifty years would be torn from their possession by the Government of Canada and themselves sent adrift, their rights to the soil would be invaded, their houses taken from them, enormous taxes would be levied, and the most absolute tyranny forced upon them. They would be bought and sold like slaves.

"With these views firmly established in the very heart of the populace, we cannot wonder at the popularity of the movement which was created to resist to the death what some called Canadian coercion. Our only astonishment is, all things considered, that there

³⁶ *Ibid.*, John McTavish, p. 1. Moreover, "the new lines of survey bisected the lots in many places, and in some instances passed through their buildings, or left their buildings on their neighbour's farm". Is it to be wondered at, then, if the Métis "were very much alarmed, feeling that their property, which they had occupied so long, was to be rendered valueless, or to be deteriorated in value"? (O'Donnell, *Manitoba as I saw it*, p. 29).

was not more blood spilled and more cruelties practised than there were ” ³⁷.

After the foregoing respectable array of uncontroverted and uncontrovertible facts, all culled from works by English Protestants unfavourable to Riel, statements the number of which could very easily be swelled up, would it be believed that an author who takes himself seriously, and who, coming after others, has had the opportunity of profiting by their findings—and the fact that he quotes from us shows that he has read at least some of their writings ³⁸ — has the cheek, at this late hour, to call them “ *alleged* causes of the discontent ” ³⁹? If that is not what is called prevaricating, we fail to understand the meaning of the plainest words.

This is pointed out here as an instance among many of the little respect many English-speaking writers entertain for historical truth when the reputation of Riel and his followers is at stake.

This is perhaps the proper place to open a parenthesis and indulge in a short digression, all the more allowable as this is not merely a formal account of the events under review (especially as we have not as yet commenced our narrative), but a “ critical ” study of the same.

Nobody will question the absolutely unimpeachable character of the authorities we have so far referred to: Protestants, and official blue books emanating from the British and the Canadian Governments. So manifestly evident has been the distortion of facts and

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 381, 186.

³⁸ F. H. Schofield, *The Story of Manitoba*, pp. 230 and 241; Winnipeg, 1913.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 286. Italics ours.

so wild the insinuations inspired by hatred, sourness and prejudice, that the one English author, Alexander Begg, who can be styled the only eye-witness to what he wrote about in his *Creation of Manitoba* ⁴⁰, has been practically tabooed because too fair and impartial to suit ill-disguised partisanship. Nay more, it is even claimed that his volume was as much as possible suppressed under Orange influences. It is certainly next to impossible to find it to-day.

Alexander Begg, who must not be confounded with his namesake who wrote a History of British Columbia, was privileged to witness the various phases of the Red River drama ⁴¹. His testimony must therefore

⁴⁰ Toronto, 1871.

⁴¹ He was born at Quebec on the 19th. of July, 1840, came to Assiniboia in 1867 and went in partnership with A. G. B. Bannatyne, the most important private merchant of what was commencing to be called Winnipeg. Next we see him filling the functions of Collector of Customs when McDougall reached the frontier of his intended Territory. Though probably not connected with him in any way, he arrived with him at Pembina (Nov. 30, 1869) en route for Fort Garry, and had to stay some time at the frontier village.

Very public-spirited, though apparently rather versatile, he was after the troubles connected with various mercantile and literary undertakings. Having retired from partnership with Bannatyne in the beginning of Nov., 1871, he founded *The Manitoba Trade Review* on Jan. 1 of the following year, and edited it until March 9, 1872, when, in collaboration with the Hon. Mr. Joseph Royal, he transformed it into the *Gazette and Trade Review*. Having afterwards severed his connection with that venture, he edited the *Daily Nor'wester*. In 1877, we see him at the head of a conservative publication, *The Herald*, which however, was soon to die of starvation, for the lack of a sufficient supply of governmental milk.

But his most enduring fame rests on his books. Apart from one, *Dot it down*, which is chiefly fiction, these were: *The Creation of Manitoba, or a History of the Red River Troubles*,

be endowed with a priceless value in the eyes of the real historian. Nevertheless may we not be allowed to remark in this connection how prejudice, or the influence of environment, can affect the reasoning powers even of the most upright men? Rev. A. C. Garrioch was also in the country at the time of the Red River troubles; in fact, he taught in St. John's College from 1868 to 1871 and for that reason had to keep aloof from the turmoil at his very door, after which he was stationed for many years at Portage la Prairie, in the midst of Riel's most bitter enemies.

Referring in his *First Furrows* to above mentioned honest Alexander Begg, he says that "he was in a splendid condition to get his facts, but in a poor position to form an opinion without bias, for he was business partner with A. G. Bannatyne, in a general store which catered to the Métis as well as others, and Mr. Bannatyne and the Hudson's Bay Governor, Wm. McTavish were married to sisters, and the latter being at this time in very poor health, Mr. Bannatyne had to act as go-between for him and the Métis" ⁴².

This piece of reasoning seems rather strange to us. Who is the better equipped to judge sanely on happenings, he who knows of them and their inner side through only one party, or he who is informed by two opposite sides? To form a proper opinion of the half-

1871; *Ten Years in Winnipeg*, 1879; *History of the North-West*, 3 vols., 1894. None of these works evidences any special literary capacities. They betray a man who attaches too great importance to details which are not significant, a writer who is innocent of the art of coupling his facts by means of the proper transitions. But a much more substantial quality pervades them throughout: a great love of truth, which would be still more appreciated if he could relate them with a little more sprightliness.

⁴² *Op. cit.*, p. 204.

breed doings, must one eschew their company and listen only to their opponents? To us Begg, even if he had not had all of his facts first-hand, was in the very best position possible not only to learn and record them, but even to take in their real significance, inasmuch as he was constantly noting down events and keeping a diary of the daily occurrences around him ⁴³.

At any rate, he was not prejudiced by the people with whom he was living, who were so fanatically opposed to one of the parties that they could not have a good word for him.

Before going farther, let us repeat that the above mentioned book of Mr. Begg's, together with that compilation with a twofold object, John S. Ewart's *The Manitoba School Question*, with which is coupled *An Historical Account of the Red River Outbreak* ⁴⁴, are the only reliable accounts, the former first-hand, the latter compiled from divers sources, of the Red River Insurrection. Both contain most valuable information recorded, in the first place, with the greatest simplicity and a straightforwardness which is not absolutely without mistakes and, in the second, with a juridical logic and lucidity which cannot be surprising, coming from an author prominent in his profession as was Mr. Ewart.

Closing our parenthesis about Al. Begg, we now revert to the question of the encroachments of the Canadian surveyors and others on the landed rights of the original population of Assiniboia. While the public

⁴³ "Mr. Begg resided at Fort Garry throughout the whole period, and kept a carefully compiled diary, not only of events, but of the rumours and anticipations of the days as they passed" (Ewart, *The Man. School Question*, p. 318).

⁴⁴ Toronto, 1894.

mind was not a little disturbed by their audacious operations and their imprudent sayings, it was ascertained that Mr. McDougall, the pseudo-governor of the country stranded at Pembina, on the frontier, "held frequent communications with their leader, John C. Schultz" ⁴⁵. The identity of his views with those of the "arrogant exponents of the Canadian policy in Red River" ⁴⁶ was soon confirmed by the appointment of Col. John Stoughton Dennis, who "arrived with a staff of surveyors to divide and subdivide the land into sections as they saw fit" ⁴⁷.

All these strangers now fell victims to a perfect land fever. They staked out for themselves and friends in Ontario what they wanted of the best lands, occupied or not, and their leader appropriated enough "to make him one of the largest landed proprietors in the Dominion" ⁴⁸, had he been allowed to take possession of them. Finally it began to look as if no man's property was safe.

Now we might ask any fair-minded reader: Is not the right of ownership one of the most sacred privileges of a free manhood? To put the question is to answer it. That right is so inalienable that even a legitimate government must recognize it; so that the people of the Red River Settlement would have been warranted in resisting forcibly the ruthless expropriation of their land by their own government. When that expropriation is attempted by an outside government which has absolutely no jurisdiction over it, the right of resistance is doubly clear.

⁴⁵ Begg, *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 22.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

CHAPTER IV

THE RISING NOT A REBELLION

The causes of the discontent in the Colony of Assiniboia being thus well established, the legitimacy of an opposition to the unwarranted aggression of outsiders becomes just as patent. What were the poor natives to do in order to counteract the effects of the strangers' audacity and bring them to terms? Were those "ignorant halfbreeds" able to cope with the pretentious, well-read (?) invaders from Canada?

Yes, and that is why some English writers have ever felt so sore about it. Yes, because by the side of other well-educated Métis such as Louis Schmidt, the son of a German father¹, who had gone through a classical course in the East, Ambroise Didyme Lépine, an ex-Brother of the Christian Schools, who had been a school teacher, as well as Charles Nolin, himself a former professor, they had a man in the very prime of life, that terrible, that hateful Louis Riel, who had likewise enjoyed a classical education and was to show himself the equal, nay the superior, of any of the new-comers from the East.

Louis Riel was the eldest son of a Métis of Ile à la

¹ Being brought up amongst the French and speaking their language as his mother tongue, Louis Schmidt was always considered a Métis.

Crosse who, in 1849², played the part of a tribune among his compatriots, and of the daughter of the first white woman of the West, Marie-Anne Gaboury, who died in St. Boniface in the course of 1878³. Born at St. Boniface⁴ on the 22nd. of October, 1844, he was through his father a halfbreed, and because of his mother a quarteroon, which categories are for practical purposes confounded into one, that of the Métis—all this in spite of Lord Wolseley's pronouncement that he "was born of French Canadian parents" and "had not a drop of Indian blood in him"⁵.

The boy grew up to be not only active and studious, being constantly at the head of his class, but kindly and most charitable, often sharing his meal with a poorer fellow student, while he constantly entertained the greatest respect for his parents. It is even on record that, having one day been challenged to fight by a

² Not in 1846 as Schofield has it, perhaps through a misprint, p. 232 of his *Story of Manitoba*.

³ Whereby we see how correct is David M. Duncan in his text-book, *The Story of the Canadian People*, where he says: "Riel was the son of a white father and a halfbreed mother". Just the opposite! If that book had only that error about Riel! In an appendix to our *History of the Catholic Church in West Canada*, we expose eleven mistakes in one page of that school book, on which is fed the youth of this country. As to his mother, see Fr. Dugas, *La Première Canadienne au Nord-Ouest*, 2nd. ed.; Saint-Dizier, 1907.

⁴ In the February number of the *Northwest Review* for 1930, another Métis with a college education, Guillaume Charette, gives him out in a valuable sketch as a native of St. Vital. There was no St. Vital when he was born.

⁵ *The Red River Expedition*, p. 213 (ap. Blackwood Magazine, vol. I). G. M. Adam and others are just as inaccurate. Cf. *The Canadian North-West*, p. 199; *The Life and Career of Sir John A. Macdonald*, p. 354.

class-mate, young Riel refused "unless his father would sanction it" ⁶.

His undeniable intelligence and general good conduct, in spite of a certain excitability which was in after years to somewhat cloud for the public his native kindness and other qualities, soon attracted the attention of Bishop Taché, of St. Boniface, who became his great protector and who, because of the youth's religious dispositions, thought that he might have a vocation for the ecclesiastical state ⁷.

In recognition of this promising make-up the prelate sent him (1858), to the College of Montreal, where, thanks to the liberality of Madame Masson, of Terrebonne, the wife of the author of that invaluable compilation *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest* ⁸, he went through a complete classical course, in company with, among others, a French Canadian boy, Joseph Dubuc, who was in after life to succeed so highly in the same western field where Louis Riel was ultimately to occasion such a torrent of vituperation, on the one side, and of gratitude, on the other ⁹.

Young Riel had commenced the study of Latin at the College of St. Boniface. As he remained nine years

⁶ Dr. Mulvaney, *The History of the North-West Rebellion*, p. 26.

⁷ His own father had tried to enter the Order of the Oblates in the East, and had even commenced his novitiate therein.

⁸ Two volumes, Quebec, 1889 and 1890.

⁹ Everyone knows that, as a climax to a most honourable political career, Dubuc was to become Chief Justice of the province, which his halfbreed comrade had contributed to bring into existence, being furthermore rewarded for his public services by being raised to the rank of a knight by the king of England. Cf. *Un Grand Canadien, Sir Joseph Dubuc*, par le R. P. E. Lecompte, S. J.; Montréal, 1923.

in that of Montreal¹⁰, he had plenty of time to get a thoroughly good education, an education of which some of those who called him "half-educated"¹¹ could certainly not boast.

At the close of his studies, he went to the United States, and stayed in St. Paul, where he made the acquaintance of Father (afterwards Archbishop) Ireland, until he returned to his mother's, Red River Settlement, in the early fall of 1868, according to some, in June, 1869, if we are to believe others¹². He then

¹⁰ "While in Montreal on a visit, I met Riel and told him that now that I had secured an education for him, he must begin to shift for himself" (Mgr. Taché, *ap.* Boulton's *Reminiscences*, p. 91, and in other books).

¹¹ Beckles Willson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 164, an author who, elsewhere in the course of his other book on the same personage, perpetrates the monumental blunder of writing *corpus non grata*, which betrays the fact that Riel's critic did not now the elements of Latin, the classical tongue of all educated gentlemen with which the latter was familiar (*Cf.* p. 186), while, as to French, one can see, p. 58 of the other work, the egregious mistakes he makes in what he is supposed to record in that language. If therefore Riel was "half-educated" despite his linguistic attainments, what must be said of his contemptor who knew not the rudiments of either Latin or French?

¹² This last alternative is based indirectly on the authority of Major Boulton, who reproduces in his book of *Reminiscences* (pp. 90-91) a "cutting from a newspaper" which attributes the following to the late Archbishop Taché: "In 1867, while in Montreal on a visit, I met Riel and told him that now that I had secured an education for him, he must begin to look out for himself and endeavour to gain a respectable living. He went to the United States and remained there until he returned to his mother in the Red River Settlement in the fall of 1868".

But it is only right to remark that, according to Father Dugas, who was then stationed at Saint-Boniface, "early in the spring of 1869, he set out for Red River, which he reached in the course of the month of June" (*Hist. véridique*, p. 44). Were it not for the fact that, but one page before, the clergyman has

used to go on an occasional trip between that place and the capital of Minnesota—a circumstance which probably gave rise to those reports we see in some publications to the effect that he was leading the life of a freighter before turning to politics.

However this may be, he was soon to find a more congenial occupation nearer home. From the parental domain in St. Vital, he was a witness to the outrages and threats his fellow Métis had to undergo at the hands of the new-comers, and little by little, though he was as yet scarcely 25 years of age—not 27 as some have it¹³ — he was drawn by the vortex of events into taking the lead in the movement of protestation against the encroachments of Ottawa's minions.

What were his qualifications for such a post? He had, we have seen, received an education such as no individual in the Colony enjoyed, outside of the ranks of the clergy. But personally what kind of a man was he? Here we cannot resist the temptation of giving the opinions of various authors, none of them Catholic, who quite often betray the prejudices proper to their

fallen into the unaccountable error of writing that Riel was only 21 in 1869, we would, in spite of Taché's wonderful memory for dates, adopt his priest's version instead of his own. But in this particular connection, we must remember, first, that the statement attributed to the venerable prelate is not signed by him. Boulton found it merely in an irresponsible newspaper, and we personally know of the many inaccuracies which usually creep into accounts of interviews. Then, secondly, we find in the same "paper clipping" the confession by the Archbishop that "from the time of his return, till the outbreak of 1869 I did not see much of him, being a good deal absent in connection with my duties; so, as a matter of fact, I had but a comparatively slight acquaintance with Riel" (*Op. cit.*, p. 91).

¹³ Cf. Prud'homme, *Monseigneur Noël-Joseph Ritchot*, p. 70.



LOUIS RIEL

class, while forced, as it were, to recognize in him an ability which only fools could deny.

According to Sir John A. Macdonald who, writing before the fiasco of the opposition to Riel's rule, had no reason to feel sore about it, he was "a clever fellow" whom "you (Wm. McDougall) should endeavour to retain as an officer in your future police" ¹⁴. On the same page on which Beckles Willson records that appreciation, he feels constrained to admit in his own name that "Riel was indeed a remarkable man", though in a later work the same author takes the liberty of qualifying his original judgment by calling him "a young man of fiery and fanatical nature" ¹⁵.

Donald A. Smith, afterwards Lord Strathcona, who was no great friend of his, for causes which fully justified his enmity, wrote himself: "Riel may have his faults and weaknesses [who has not at 25?], but he is decidedly a man out of the common... His manner is restless and his assumption of dignity and coolness is constantly interrupted by explosions of temper which as quickly subside again. He seems fairly well educated and, on the whole, strikes me as a remarkable but ill-balanced man" ¹⁶.

We cannot help remarking that, without excluding the stricture on his temper, this is the most faithful description of Louis Riel's make-up we know of. Viewing him from a narrower angle, J. P. Robertson, the late Provincial Librarian of Manitoba, contented himself with stating that "he showed considerable skill as a diplomatist" ¹⁷.

¹⁴ *Ap. B. Willson, Lord Strathcona*, p. 46.

¹⁵ *The Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 161.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

¹⁷ *A Political Manual of the Province of Manitoba*, p. 10 ; Winnipeg, 1887.

Mr. Robert Machrea, the biographer of his uncle of the same name, speaks of the Métis leader's "astuteness" ¹⁸, and declares that he was "more intelligent than the majority of his confreres (*sic*)" ¹⁹.

The same writer refers also to the megalomania attributed to him by Archbishop Taché. In connection with the 1869-70 happenings, this is scarcely to the point. The great Catholic prelate used that expression of the Riel of 1885, never of his protégé of the former period, who may, however, have then harboured some germs of that mental disease which was later to come to a head in the Saskatchewan valley.

Machrea adds: "What is certain is that Riel possessed considerable courage, determination and force" ²⁰. The writer responsible for that rather flattering appreciation seems to have had before his eyes, and been intent in correcting, that of an earlier author, G. Mercer Adam, who had written: "Without physical courage ²¹, he had considerable moral determination and a force of character which, however, had its fits of weakness" ²².

In another of his books the same Adam, who, as we have seen, was an ex-officer, is bolder and less addicted to restrictions. Riel, he then affirms, was "daring, young... , wily as a savage, brilliant and energetic" ²³.

As to Major Boulton, his quondam prisoner and would-be victim, he deemed Riel "clever enough to

¹⁸ *Life of Robert Machrea*, p. 182.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

²¹ Quite untrue, as shown by subsequent events.

²² *The Canadian North-West*, p. 199.

²³ *The Life and Career of the Rt. Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald*, p. 354.

make tools of every one who came in his way, not even excepting the clergy ”²⁴, which we doubt extremely. The author of the *Life of Governor Dufferin* merely calls him “a shrewd young French Canadian ”²⁵, whereby it is apparent that that historian was familiar with Wolseley’s error and shared it.

Note now the darkening of the picture as years go by and as this is undertaken by artists who never knew the subject, and painted him conformably to the grudges of those who had indeed been acquainted with him, but had had forcedly to bow to his superior ability. See the effect of the slanders of those he had worsted and remark the different psychical features of the man they pretend to depict.

With Miss E. L. Marsh, though still “a clever speaker ”²⁶, Riel descends to the rank of a “man of some ability ” only. A recent writer makes him in turn “a man of some [!] education but little sense ”²⁷. In a still later pamphlet the same writes that Riel was “better educated and worse tempered than the majority of his people ”²⁸, which is, of course, very “smart ”.

Another Englishman, more eloquent than truthful, says of the same: “Fluency of speech and magnetism of manner gave him ready control over his compa-

²⁴ *Reminiscences*, p. 64.

²⁵ *The Marquess of Dufferin and Ava*, by Chas. E. D. Black, p. 109; London, 1903.

²⁶ *Where the Buffalo roamed*, p. 165; Toronto, 1908.

²⁷ H. A. Kennedy, *The Book of the West*, p. 89; Toronto, 1925.

²⁸ *The North-West Rebellion*, p. 5; Toronto, s. d. This little essay has since been incorporated word for word in *Builders of the West*, pp. 43-54; Toronto, [1929].

triot; unchecked ambition and extraordinary vanity blinded him to the folly of resisting the authority (*sic*) of the Dominion”²⁹. If the poor man who has concocted the text-book (yea a text-book for the children of Manitoba and Ontario!) from which this is taken had not died some time ago, we would ask him to show what infinitesimal bit of “authority” the Dominion then had over what is now Manitoba, and how Riel tried to resist it. The same might also have shown us where lay the “folly” of resisting that pretended authority when the would-be “resister” got all he wanted therefrom.

Is it not a crime to feed our poor innocent school children on such untruthful trash?

We will close this list of English Protestant appreciations of the personality of Riel by that of one who, though he never saw him, was nevertheless his contemporary, but is generally blinded by prejudice against anything or anybody Catholic—we mean of course, Dr. G. Bryce. This will be the bouquet of our array of quotations. Riel, he writes, was “a young man of fair ability, but proud, vain and assertive”³⁰, and had the ambition to be a Caesar or a Napoléon”³¹, a remark which is as preposterous as it is unfounded. But Bryce could not write otherwise. Was not Riel a Catholic? Had he not French blood in his veins?

²⁹ David M. Duncan, *The Story of the Canadian People*, p. 350.

³⁰ He certainly did not show himself so with Gen. Butler, if the author of *The Great Lone Land* is truthful.

³¹ *The Rem. History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, p. 465. Poor Dr. Bryce has not even the merit of that “find”. Cf. Butler, *The Great Lone Land*, p. 133, who goes one better on him by calling Riel “the Ogre”.

Strangely enough, the one English author who is the most accurate in his general lines on Riel is W. T. R. Preston who, in his short account of the Red River troubles, manages to be the most inaccurate. He writes that "the leader of the rebellion (*sic*), Louis Riel, was an educated halfbreed... The Church had educated him hoping to capture him for the priesthood" ³².

³² *The Life and Times of Lord Strathcona*, p. 40; Toronto, [1915]. Now for his inaccuracies. The triple dot in our quotation replaces a sentence whereby Preston gives vent to his favourite hobby, namely that the Red River halfbreeds, even to Riel, were attracted to the full-blooded Indians and their ways more than to the whites, a fanciful idea which does not correspond to facts; according to him, the insurrection started "during the absence of the local Governor of the Hudson's Bay Co. in the east" (p. 41); "the murder of Scott seemed to rouse the dormant Indian passions, and a general massacre of the whites was feared" (p. 42), not an iota of which is true; McDougall was "threatened with Scott's fate" (p. 43), just as contrary to facts; when he returned to Ottawa, he, the same McD., made "the amazing discovery... that, owing to carelessness... the Governor-General's Proclamation annexing the H. B. Co. Territory to the Dominion of Canada had not been issued" (*ibid.*) — a "disturbing news", remarks the author, as if McDougall had not long been aware of that, and as if said proclamation was to have come from the Governor of Canada instead of from the Imperial Government acting in the name of the Queen!

The same Preston is apparently unaware of the reason why Bishop Taché was in Rome at the time of the insurrection, since he merely states that he was there on "an official visit" (p. 49), and, worse than all, he goes to the length of giving expression to the perfectly unheard of and imaginary circumstance that "it was a question with Riel's government whether Thomas Scott or John Ashdown should be arrested", as if only two prisoners had been taken and one had to be shot! And then is that author serious or rambling when he writes in that connection that "Ashdown's fate is said to have been decided on the chance drawing of two straws of unequal length" (p. 53)!...

Is not that a climax! It does really seem as if the author wanted to ascertain how much nonsense his readers could stand.

As to his manners and appearance, Dr. Mulvaney says that "he is a total abstainer³³, can speak French, English and four Indian Languages" — he forgets his knowledge of Latin, with which every student of a French college is acquainted. "He speaks slowly, deliberately and with effect. He is strong, of fair stature, square-shouldered, with features of greater mobility and expression than most half Indians"³⁴.

Lastly, the biographer of *Lord Dufferin and his Administration*, Geo. Stewart, declares that "Riel was intelligent and wary", while, of course, "the men under him were ignorant and superstitious"³⁵, an old refrain of such authors.

Two years after the events we are about to recite, a French Huguenot, therefore still a Protestant, H. de Lamothe, found him "a tall young man with easy manners, an open-hearted, intelligent and sympathetic mien"³⁶. A little further on, the same traveller has it that he talked at length with him of the past, present and future, and adds that, "though our interview

And where did he fish out that John Ashdown? Does he mean the "tinker", as he calls him, James H. Ashdown? But when it became necessary to execute Thomas Scott, Jas. H. Ashdown was free, in his own establishment, and was not one of the 48 rebels captured who became so unruly that one had to be put out of the way for the sake of example. Verily and truly, are not such blunders a good excuse for a work like the present one?

³³ While other English authors would seem occasionally to accuse him of drunkenness!

³⁴ *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885*, p. 27.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 382.

³⁶ "Un grand jeune homme aux allures dégagées, à la figure ouverte, intelligente et sympathique" (*Cinq Mois chez les Français d'Amérique*, p. 271; Paris, 1879).

lasted but a few hours, I kept of it the keenest and best recollection ” ³⁷.

Such is the way a French Protestant, who was all the more disinterested and dispassionate as he did not entertain the grudge of a man wounded in his racial pride by a previous worsting, spoke of that horrible bugbear, that greasy, murderous tyrant, the “Ogre” of English Protestant authors.

Capt. Wm. F. Butler, that impressionable Irishman who had with the Métis chief an interview of a very different kind—because subjectively not so much of a gentleman as his French host showed himself to be—makes him, contrary to de Lamothe and others, “a short man”, after which he says that he had “a large head, a sallow, puffy face, a sharp, restless, intelligent eye, a square-cut massive forehead overhung by a mass of long and thickly clustered hair, and marked with well-cut eye-brows—together a remarkable looking face, all the more so, perhaps, because it was to be seen where such things are sights ” ³⁸.

Then the doughty soldier falls heavily upon his, to him, unbecoming footgear, moccasins, which make him indulge in quite amusing spells of mirth. The effect of his costume, he says, was “not a little marred by a pair of Indian moccasins”, after which he launches his choicest gibes at “the moccasined President ” ³⁹, remarking later that “the moccasins sadly marred the exhibition of presidential power ” ⁴⁰, as if the powers of a statesman resided in his feet!

The poor stranger evidently did not know that these

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

³⁸ *The Great Lone Land*, p. 133; London, 1872.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

moccasins which so highly scandalized him were then in general use among all classes of people in the Settlement, as we read in the Earl of Southesk's *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*. Speaking of the nunnery at St. Boniface, just across the Red, that gentleman formally states that "moccasins were worn instead of shoes, according to the universal custom of the country, to which even bishops conformed" ⁴¹.

From a more strictly physical standpoint, Donald A. Smith wrote in a letter quoted in his *Life*: "His appearance is striking; he is swarthy, with a large head, a fine brow and a piercing eye" ⁴².

According to the recollections of one Alfred Franks, who knew him at the Lower Stone Fort, Riel was "a man over medium height, stout, athletic, with black hair and clear eyes, neatly dressed and polite and manly in his bearing" ⁴³, while Hudson's Bay Co. Chief Trader W. J. McLean remembers him as "a fine looking man, strong, stout and about five feet ten or eleven in height, a man who spoke well and was shrewd and clever" ⁴⁴.

Without being a very tall man, such as was, for instance, his brother Joseph who was very powerfully built, Louis Riel was certainly above the average in height. As to his features, several of his portraits scarcely do him justice, through no fault of the artist: they represent him as he was when disguising himself, owing to the relentless persecution of which he was the object at the hands of Orangemen. The photograph

⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 33; Edinburgh, 1875.

⁴² *Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 162.

⁴³ Ap. Robert Watson, *The Lower Fort Garry*, p. 38; Winnipeg, 1928.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

of him we reproduce in this work was given us by the aforesaid brother, who declared that no other was so resembling.

Now that, thanks mostly to what his enemies have been forced to write, we are fairly well acquainted with the person of the Métis leader, it behooves us, before relating the events of which he was the soul and prime mover, to ask ourselves whether he was really warranted in doing what he did.

The right to his political conduct we might consider as flowing from what we have said of the causes of the outbreak, several — not all — of which we have exposed in our preceding chapter. But Riel may have gone too far? It must be admitted that the population, especially that of French origin, was warranted to rise before it was too late against the prospect of illegal eviction and unprovoked grievous annoyances with regard to civil, religious and educational right. But was revolt against proper authority allowable, under the circumstances? In other words, was not the Red River Insurrection a rebellion.

It has been very commonly so styled by English writers, and continues to be so called by ignorant or careless people who do not know the value of words or labour under a total misconception as to the real happenings of 1869⁴⁵. This accusation is simply preposterous, nay, perfectly ridiculous, in the eyes of such as are familiar with history and have not abdicated all claims to be regarded as endowed with the faculty of reasoning.

⁴⁵ Another thoughtless class of people who use that expression yield to a childish foible of the English writers, especially journalists, for alliteration. They feel elated when they can fall on such titles, or slogans, as *Winnipeg Wirings*, *Brandon Budget*, *Calgary Clippings*, *Saskatoon Sayings*, and other such ex-

There never was a rebellion at Red River ⁴⁶. For against whom did the Métis rise? Against the Government of Ottawa, such as represented by their agents, Schultz and Bown and Dennis and McDougall. But what manner of a right had that government to the colony of Assiniboia? Absolutely none until the 15th. of July, 1870, when, in virtue of a formal transfer effected by the Imperial Cabinet after that of Ottawa had expressly consented to do what it should have thought of before sending any agents west (that is, after it had guaranteed the rights of the colonists detailed in the Bill of Rights), Assiniboia became part of the Dominion under the name of Manitoba.

Before that date Assiniboia was, with regard to Canada, in the same position as Newfoundland is to-day, with this aggravating circumstance that over one-half of her population differed in language and religion from that part of Canada, Ontario, which insisted on the acquisition of the western territories. This is so evident that the Colonial-Secretary, Lord Granville, plainly admitted in a letter to Father Lestanc the privilege of the halfbreeds to refuse to enter Confederation. Nay, as late as the 22nd., of March, 1870, Sir Frederic Rogers, his private secretary, was writing that "troops should not be employed in forcing the sovereignty of Canada on the population of Red River" ⁴⁷.

pressions. One can imagine their satisfaction when they can get hold of something like *Red River Rebellion*, and their puerile contentment is extreme when they have given birth to such a title as *Riel Red River Rebellion Related!*

⁴⁶ Except that of the Canadians against the Government which they had given themselves through their representatives at the Convention.

⁴⁷ March 22, 1870, *ap. Dom Benoît, Vie de Mgr. Taché*, vol. II, p. 82.

Moreover when the Canadian authorities asked London for troops to facilitate the transfer of the country to Canada, Lord Granville cabled that " Her Majesty's Government will give military assistance provided reasonable terms are granted Red River settlers " ⁴⁸. Was not this plain intimation from the most authoritative party in the Empire that the Assiniboians had a right to seek those " reasonable terms "? What else did they do?

And, under the circumstances such as we know them, where is the sane man who can show that they would have received what they were given if they had not forced the Ottawa politicians to grant it in advance, after negotiations which would have otherwise been ineffectual? How could such negotiations have so much as taken place if the Métis had not risen in arms?

The very fact that, owing to the objections of the latter, the date of the transfer of their country to Canada was shifted in London from December 1, 1869 to July 15th. of the following year is clear evidence that they were perfectly justified in declining to play into the hands of the wily ones of the Ottawa cabinet.

The reader must not lose sight of this all-important fact if he wishes to be in a position to judge sanely what was to follow. It is a fact which the most bigoted writer cannot deny, and which ought to shame him into refraining from using in connection with the Red River troubles a word, rebellion, which is in itself a slander.

There would have been a rebellion if Riel and his friends had ever renounced their allegiance to the British Crown. But, in spite of the most violent hatred and unfounded prejudices, which his very name has

⁴⁸ The Earl Granville to Governor-General of Canada, London, 5 March, 1870.

long sufficed to conjure among a certain class of Canadians, it is now proved beyond contest, and admitted by all fair-minded Protestants who are at all conversant with the question, that Riel was, and remained to the last, favourable to the British connection.

Great were the inducements offered him by Americans⁴⁹ to falter in his allegiance, but he would not hear of any proposals the acceptance of which would have made him traitor to his Sovereign. We might add that his loyalty was all the more commendable as he had to struggle against one of his own associates, whom the wish to secure the goodwill of the Irish portion of the population had led him to admit in his Administration⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ "Outside of the Fenian associations, the Provisional Government of Red River repudiated offers that might have seduced its members, had not the sentiment of allegiance prevailed; sums of money amounting to more than four millions of dollars (\$4,000,000), men and arms had been offered, and the whole was refused by those 'rebels' " (Archbishop Taché, in a letter to His Excellency the Governor-General of Canada, Hamilton, 23rd. July, 1870; *op. Canadian Blue Book (N.-W. Committee Evidence, p. 42).*

⁵⁰ A perhaps more weighty reason for keeping O'Donoghue in his Administration may be found in the fact that the young Irishman had uncommon aptitudes for bookkeeping and all that pertains to the duties of an accountant. In an unpublished memoir on the troubles of 1869-70, Rev. L. Raymond Giroux, one of the priests stationed at St. Boniface at the time, has the following:

"Mr. Riel, who had at heart the British connection, was one day complaining to me that O'Donoghue was striving to give the movement an annexationist complexion. 'But, he said, I am in absolute need of him; he administers his department with care and treats exceedingly well the halfbreeds, of whom he has become the idol' ".

William B. O'Donoghue was first met (June, 1868) by Bishop Grandin and Mr. Giroux, at Port Huron, Michigan, as

In fact, we will even see in its proper place that Riel and his Métis have probably to be thanked for the fact that the immensities to the west of Ontario and east of the Rockies are to-day Canadian and not American.

Owing to an unfortunate occurrence which raised anti-French passions to the boiling point, most of the English writers can scarcely have a kind word for Louis Riel. Nevertheless, even his greatest enemies could not help acknowledging his fidelity to the British institutions, a fact which is all the more significant as his well-known impulsiveness and excitable dispositions might, in the face of the provocations from those who seemed to claim a monopoly of loyalty, have betrayed him into imprudent acts or words, had he not been so firmly rooted in his pro-British sentiments.

A few passages from the official documents of the time will amply corroborate our assertions. Under date December 16, 1869, Mr. (afterwards Sir) John A. Macdonald admitted in his *Report of a Committee*

the prelate and his companions were proceeding to Red River. The young man having offered his services for the western missions, he became a member of the little caravan. At St. Boniface he was appointed Professor of Mathematics in the College, and commenced at the same time his own studies with a view to entering the ecclesiastical state. Father Groulx states that he was at the time—and others would say—of temperate habits and an excellent professor.

He feels especially indignant at the epithet "scoundrel" given him by "ignorant Dr. Bryce", adding: "He was a gentleman in the strictest meaning of the word". For our own part, we cannot help remarking that, in view of his avowed anti-British sentiments, he was, to say the least, in an anomalous position when he served in a government that professed an undivided allegiance to the Queen. It would have been more honourable for him to step out, or at least keep his political preferences to himself.

of the Honourable the Privy Council that the resistance of the halfbreeds (and consequently of their leader as well) "is evidently not against the sovereignty of Her Majesty or the government of the Hudson's Bay Company, but to the assumption of the government by Canada" ⁵¹. Can any proof of our contention be stronger than this confession of him who, with Sir Georges Cartier, had been the chief, though involuntary, cause of the whole trouble?

But three days earlier, Mr. William McDougall himself admitted this loyalty in a letter he wrote to Riel, wherein he said: "As the representative of the Sovereign ⁵², to whom you and they [the halfbreeds] owe, and I am told do not wish to deny allegiance, it is proper that some such communication should reach me" ⁵³. This trust in Riel's pro-British sentiments was based on the reports of spies the would-be governor was keeping among the disaffected halfbreeds.

Such were the loyal feelings of the latter that, on December 6, 1869, the same party wrote to the Secretary of State at Ottawa that the production of his own spurious proclamation "had a most tranquillizing effect. Riel said: 'This puts a different face on the matter', and, as my informant says, 'expressed much loyalty'. He appealed to the English delegates (some of whom still remained in his Convention to watch his proceedings) to help him *peacefully* get their rights" ⁵⁴. The italics are McDougall's.

That this attachment to the British connection was

⁵¹ British Blue Book, p. 53.

⁵² He speaks of himself, though he was never invested with that quality.

⁵³ British Blue Book, p. 73.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

persevered in is shown by a dispatch from the Governor of Canada to the British Colonial Secretary. That high official wired Lord Granville: "The latest news from Red River is that a convention, half French, half English, met on January 25th. Riel opened the proceedings with a loyal speech"⁵⁵. This was dated February 15, 1870.

In case the reader should require additional evidence of Riel's sympathies for the British tie, here is a passage from the sworn deposition of a prominent English speaking and Protestant Assiniboian, Mr. Bannatyne, which refers to a period, late in the history of the Red River troubles, when the halfbreed leader was beset by Americans bent on bringing him over to their own political aspirations.

"At the time of the publication of the *New Nation*⁵⁶, it was altogether American. I heard from Riel that he would never work for annexation to the States. I saw Mr. Coldwell, who was connected with the paper, and told him that Riel had told me that the next issue would be stronger than the previous one, but that it would be the last. Mr. Coldwell said that if he could do that he was an abler man than he believed him.

"Immediately after, the editor was put out of place, and another editor put in, and the tone of the paper was changed. Riel said he was willing to take assistance from all quarters; but as soon as he was strong enough, he would repudiate the American element. I know that Stutzman [a pro-American agitator] came down from Pembina, and shortly after was sent away by Riel on short notice"⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁵⁶ The local paper, as we have seen.

⁵⁷ *Preliminary Investigation and Trial of Ambroise D. Lépine for the Murder of Thomas Scott*, p. 73; Montreal, 1874.

Useless to add to the foregoing any further remark than this: Riel's loyalty to the British Crown was so intense that, later on, when he had been proscribed as a criminal and a premium had been placed on his head by the Government of Ontario, which had then no more jurisdiction over Manitoba than Canada had in 1869 over Assiniboia; when the fate of the new province and the Northwest was in his hands, and he had only to join with his sympathizers the Fenian invaders of that territory, who had counted on his co-operation for the success of their cause, to see the entire Northwest pass into the hands of the Americans, he manfully forgot the wrongs heaped upon his devoted head, and offered his services to the representative of the Queen, thereby rendering abortive efforts which could not succeed without his assistance.

Nay more, not only were not Riel and his people against the British connection, therefore not rebels, but we cannot even truthfully represent them as averse to their country being annexed to Canada, to which the British Secretary of State confessed they had a right to object, and into which they could not be incorporated by force of arms. "There did not seem to be any disposition on his [Riel's] part or that of his people to oppose the cession of the country to Canada", writes one of his greatest, though loyal, foes, Major Boulton, who must have been familiar with his plans, since he had occasion to remain in his company much longer than he would have wished; "but the opposition he offered seemed to be confined to the entrance of the Governor (*sic* for McDougall) or the establishment of the authority of Canada until certain rights, which he

and his supporters claimed to be their privilege. . . had been conceded ” ⁵⁸.

And a few pages further on, “ the Imperial Government, when it realized that there was opposition to the transfer on the part of the local population, refused to consummate the bargain made, or to send troops to establish the sovereignty of Canada without the people’s consent, or rather *without a due recognition of their claims* ” ⁵⁹. Italics ours.

Finally, with tears in his eyes [Riel] told them how earnestly he desired an arrangement with Canada ” ⁶⁰. All of which is confirmed by Tuttle’s declaration that “ the avowed object of [Riel’s] Council was to prevent the entry of Mr. McDougall ⁶¹ and his followers *until ‘Terms’ had been made* ” ⁶². Italics ours again.

The same historian is still more explicit further on. “ The French halfbreeds ”, he says, did not consider that they ever rebelled against British authority ; but, on the contrary, that they had only asserted their rights as British subjects to a voice in the management of their own affairs by resisting the encroachments of Canada on those rights, and that they would not have obtained those rights had they not taken up arms against Canada. They laid down their arms when they thought that the object for which they had been taken up was accomplished ” ⁶³.

⁵⁸ Hence his own assumption of power was, according to Boulton himself, but conditional. V. *Reminiscences*, p. 66.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71-72.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁶¹ Who never was the legal governor of their country.

⁶² *History of Manitoba*, by Gunn and Tuttle, p. 349.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 464.

This is the best, the clearest explanation of their aims that could be given. We cannot improve on it. The book in which we find it was published only ten years after the Insurrection; why did not the other historians avail themselves of it as we do? Why did they not get at those facts as did Tuttle before they wrote? Was it their love of historical truth which prompted them to disregard them?

If we now turn to the most authoritative source of information on that question, the official British Blue Book, what do we learn, what could have learned the romancers who imagine that the Métis had risen in order to form a new State, bound ultimately to fall into the arms of Uncle Sam? In the very beginning of the Insurrection, not only they time and again protested that their movement was *not* directed against the authority of the Queen, but when Mr. McDougall's own secretary, Mr. J. A. N. Provencher, was sent to Fort Garry, he was arrested at St. Norbert, and had a formal interview with the leaders, whom he asked whether they absolutely refused to enter the confederation of Canada.

Now here is their answer: "If the Canadian Government [were] willing to do it, they [the Métis] were ready to open negotiations with them, or with any person vested with full powers, in view of settling the terms of their coming into the Dominion of Canada " ⁶⁴.

Are we not then warranted to ask, in the face of the foregoing quotations, not one of which is from a Catholic or French writer, where is the "rebellion" of our veracious authors? If they do not know what a rebellion is, let them consult their dictionary.

⁶⁴ Brit. Blue Book, p. 20.

One who badly needs to do so is the Rev. A. C. Garrioch, to whom we have already referred more than once. While, after our argument in our *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*, historians have become more cautious in the use of a word which, we repeat, is of itself a calumny, and others have shown themselves fully convinced of the appositeness of our contention, he is the only one who has boldly come out in defence of the word rebellion as applied to Riel's Rising.

Thus we read in his *Correction Line*, an enlarged edition of his *First Furrows*, that it is regrettable that said rising cannot be designated by some "less harsh word than Rebellion" ⁶⁵. And why? Whereas the *Standard Dictionary* defines rebellion a "deliberate organized resistance, by force of arms, to the laws or operations of a government *by those who owe it obedience*", Garrioch will no doubt proceed to show that the then Assiniboians owed obedience to Canada.

But he does nothing of the kind. He gives two other reasons to prove that Riel's action was rebellious. The first is that the halfbreed seized Fort Garry, which he must know was on the point of being taken by the so-called Canadian party, whereby all redress of local wrongs would have been rendered impossible, and would have occasioned a bloody civil war. Where is

⁶⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 300; Winnipeg, 1933. Who could guess that, under such a puzzling title as *The Correction Line*, Mr. Garrioch should give, in a more or less connected way and with many a personal touch and digression, but scarcely a foot-note or reference, what he no doubt considers a History of the Protestant sects, especially his own, in the near West, though the explorations of de Lavérendrye (whom he calls Verandrye) have not much to do with any non-Catholic body?

the resistance to "a government by those who owe it obedience" in that?

In the second place, according to our author, "the word rebellion, applied to the movement from beginning to end, is perfectly correct" because, forsooth, his Provisional Government "took on itself to court-martial and execute a Thomas Scott for resisting its authority" ⁶⁶! Again we ask anyone who knows the value of words where is the rebellion in that? How did the Métis "resist" the British Government, the only one to whom they owed obedience, by executing a rebel to their own commands? In so doing they may have been right or wrong; that is not the question. The question is how, by slaying one man, good or bad, they went against the obedience they owed lawfully constituted authority.

A bad son in his anger strikes his mother, and you are justly horrified. Will you, for that reason, call his assault a murder? Mother-beating is not any more a murder than Riel's uprising was a rebellion. Twenty murders will not turn a legitimate insurrection into a rebellion, and when you write for the printer you should know it.

Two points are therefore established beyond cavil: the people of Assiniboia had excellent reasons for rising in 1869—for which see our preceding chapter—and their rising was *not* a rebellion against legitimate authority. This we have just established with the help of Riel's enemies themselves.

Having thus cleared the way of all possible misapprehensions as to the real character of the Red River Insurrection, we shall now proceed to candidly relate the various phases of a movement which we are satis-

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

fied was intended as a protest against the encroachments of Ottawa and a bid for negotiations therewith, remarking at the same time that Mgr. Alexandre Antonin Taché, O. M. I., Bishop of St. Boniface, had left for the Œcumenical Council of the Vatican, entrusting the Rev. Jean-Marie Lestanc, O. M. I., an austere and conscientious Oblate, with the care of his diocese.

While few English writers have a good word for the saintly religious ⁶⁷ because all the trouble took place under his administration, there is not one amongst them, outside of the raging bigots blinded by uncontrollable prejudice, who can gainsay the statement that the absent prelate himself was the very soul of honour, a man of most suave and kindly manners. He was moreover, in the words of Beckles Willson, a man "of unusual sagacity and enlightenment" ⁶⁸.

Now for history proper.

⁶⁷ Who, after the troubles, was so relentlessly pursued by Orange rancour that he had to be sent out to Lebret, in the Qu'Appelle Valley, where he immediately fell sick of the small-pox he had contracted on the way, by administering the rites of the Church to a poor man abandoned by his frightened relatives, whom he found dying all alone of the dread disease. Not only did he then nurse him until he expired, but he bestowed on his remains the cares his own had refused him, digging his grave and burying him without any assistance whatever.

⁶⁸ *The Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 159.

CHAPTER V

THE OUTBREAK.

The Catholic clergy have been accused not only of abetting and encouraging, but even of prompting, the Red River Insurrection, apparently because the prejudiced parties who proffered that accusation imagined the people of the Settlement too dull to be able to think for themselves and act accordingly. As they were in duty bound, the pastors sympathized with their flocks in their tribulations, but they contented themselves with guarding them against excesses, and keeping them within the limits of legality as much as was possible under circumstances which called for extraordinary measures ¹.

Nay more, they did all they could to obviate in time the necessity of any extra-legal action on the part of the people, and it was not their fault if the unaccountable supineness of those in power finally rendered such action unavoidable. They endeavoured to awaken the Ottawa Administration to the dangers they were

¹ Even after the troubles had broken out, the priests, in their official relations with the insurgents, followed the same line of conduct, as Dr. O'Donnell, a prisoner of Riel's and a man with no great love for the French, has to admit: "Every Sunday morning and sometimes during the week", he writes, "a priest from St. Boniface cathedral came and said Mass, and preached to the natives, charging them as to their duty in the present crisis. It was not always the same priest, but all spoke along pacific lines, some less so than others". (*Manitoba as I saw it*, p. 38).

creating by their lack of tact, on the one hand, and their aggressiveness, on the other, as well as by their unwillingness to interfere with the doings of their more or less official representatives in the West, at a time when they were themselves acting as if they had been the masters of a country over which they had not as yet any jurisdiction.

But even Bishop Taché, who was more familiar than anybody with the same, was practically silenced by the Federal politicians when he dared intervene on behalf of peace and justice, under the plea that "he did not understand politics".

In the summer of 1868, articles by the Rev. Georges Dugas, the French *littérateur* of the Red River, appeared in the *Nouveau-Monde*, of Montreal, which described and deprecated the ferment then at work in the Colony, because of the arrogance, presumption and dishonesty of the handful of "Canadians"² it contained, and the terrible consequences with which such uncalled for agitation was pregnant. No notice was taken of these articles.

As to his superior, Bishop Taché himself, it is really pathetic to follow him in his efforts to open the eyes of the eastern authorities to the seriousness of the situation in his diocese. And we cannot help prefacing this account of the troubles which were to ensue by fastening a great part of the responsibility therefor on the proper party, a French and Catholic public man, Sir Georges Etienne Cartier, real statesman though he was³.

² "Les Canadas", as the old Métis called them till a late date, after the word "Canada" in big letters on their own partisan flag.

³ In view of the fact that the immediate cause of the rising

The prelate told him of the repeated defiance of local authorities by Dr. Schultz and friends who, for a number of years ⁴, had shown their Orange "loyalty" by jail-breaking. He related the affronts and threats to the Métis on the part of others, and the imminent danger in which the same were of getting evicted from their holdings, inveighed on their extreme discontent, their growing sullenness and the prospect of a general outbreak, if the wrongs done them were not remedied and the intentions of the Government promptly made clear to them.

The Bishop's representations were of no avail. He none the less went on with his endeavours to ward off the danger by appealing to the sense of justice of the Canadian authorities; but Sir Georges Etienne received him in such a way that the good prelate could not decently broach again the subject to him. "He

was the unwarranted land surveying to which we have already alluded, and in justice to the pseudo-governor McDougall, who had blunders enough to his credit without that one, it is but right to associate Sir John A. Macdonald with Sir Georges E. Cartier in the ultimate responsibility for the Red River Insurrection. McDougall wrote himself in self-defense to Hon. Jos. Howe concerning the fact that Sir John A. had proposed to send no fewer than twenty surveyors to Assiniboia "to gratify our friends who wanted employment":

"I strongly objected to the proposition", he wrote... "I pointed out the danger of such precipitation, the absence of any necessity for the survey of so many townships immediately, and the fact that we had no authority until the transfer to make surveys at all [Who will say after that that the Métis were not right in their contention?] You and your then colleagues will remember the warmth of the debate" (*Ap. B. Willson, The Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 162).

⁴ April 20, 1863; April 21 of the same year as well as in 1866.



Courtesy of Rev. J. B. Beaupré, O. M. I.

BISHOP TACHE, O. M. I.

said he knew it all a great deal better than I did and did not want any information", affirmed Taché⁵.

This was in July, 1869. In September of the same year, the Bishop went to Quebec, where he met the Lieut.-Governor, to whom he told the same story.

"It is absolutely necessary that the Government should be acquainted with these circumstances", remarked His Honour.

"I know", said the Bishop, "and this is even the reason of my journey. But I have not been successful in causing my fears to be entertained".

"Sir Georges is in the house", insisted the Governor; "you must absolutely tell him this."

The same information was then repeated with the Quebec Governor as a witness; but the same negative result was the prelate's only reward.

"We know it all and are prepared for any eventuality", answered the great Ottawa man⁶.

Mgr. Taché having then received from Mr. William Mactavish, Governor of Assiniboia, a most telling letter showing that the situation was getting worse, he deemed it his duty to the Federal Cabinet, as well as to his own people, to communicate these new facts to the Hon. Hector Langevin, Minister of Public Works, since he could no longer see Sir Georges on the same. Langevin was then away, but by dint of looking for him

⁵ Canadian Blue Book (*Rep. of the Select Committee on the causes of the Difficulties*, p. 9). In his own correspondence Sir John A. Macdonald admitted himself that one of the causes of the Federal Government's embarrassment was that "Cartier rather snubbed Bishop Taché when he was here on his way to Rome" (*Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald*, by Sir Joseph Pope, p. 106; Toronto, 1921).

⁶ Who doubtless had in mind the arms that were to accompany the future Lieut.-Governor.

he was found, in the beginning of October, and told what the Bishop knew of the conditions in the Red River Settlement down to that date, after which he also tried to interest in them various other public men of the East.

All of them concurred in declaring that "it was necessary that the Government should know of these things"⁷. Mr. Mactavish's letter was then sent to Sir Georges Cartier, who answered as before. Furthermore, the next day, the Ottawa papers announced that a certain number of rifles and a quantity of ammunition would be sent to Fort Garry with Mr. William McDougall, who was soon to repair thither.

Learning of this in their isolated commonwealth, the forerunners of the Ontario immigrants west "became more and more insulting", inasmuch as their number had lately been on the increase. "They did not hesitate to say that the halfbreeds would soon be driven from the country, or kept as cart-drivers to bring in the vehicles of the new immigrants"⁸.

The impartial reader will readily grasp the situation. Here are people daily insulted in their peaceful pursuits and threatened in their property and civil rights. They protest, and the only balm which is applied to their wounds is the perspective of being shot down by rifles sent out by those who should protect them!

In the face of this, their duty was, according to sanctimonious writers who would not have stood half as much without putting everything to fire and sword, to meekly submit to the encroachments of the "superior race" (theirs), under pain of being considered as

⁷ Can. Blue Book, p. 11.

⁸ All these texts within quotation marks are taken from the same official blue book, p. 11.

rebels to an authority against which they never rose!

Nor was this all. Grievously hurt as it was in its social, political and especially economic rights, the French-speaking population of Red River had in 1868 undergone a terrible ordeal at the hands of nature itself. As a result of innumerable swarms of grasshoppers which fell on the land, everything of a vegetable nature was eaten up in the Red River valley. By July of that year, there was not an ounce of provisions to be sold in the whole Colony.

In this extremity the United States came to the assistance of the stricken people with a sum of money not any too large (£900) for such a vast country; Ontario promised more, but gave less⁹, while the Hudson's Bay Company did more than both combined, donating to the relief fund upwards of six thousand pounds sterling.

On the other hand, the Governor and Council of Assiniboia voted the sum of £250 especially for the Catholics threatened with famine, and, as a result of special collections in the churches of the Archdiocese of Quebec, \$3.200 was sent to the Bishop of St. Boniface, to which were added various other sums contributed by the Bishop of Montreal and other prelates.

Then, as if to crown all these calamities, came the news of the appointment by Canada of the bitter enemy of the French, the Hon. William McDougall, Minister of Public Works in the Federal Cabinet, who had been named (28 September, 1869) Governor, with a salary of \$7.000 per annum, of the "Territories",

⁹ And some in that province wanted that nothing should be given at all. "I am told that some of the Upper Canadian papers advocate the retention of the grant, as they say it is not required by the Red River settlers", wrote Governor Mactavish (*Cf. Canadian Blue Book*, p. 11).

over which Canada was not to have jurisdiction for almost two years to come. He had instructions to repair to Fort Garry pending the transfer of the country to the young Dominion.

Mr. McDougall had always taken a great interest in the annexation of the West, of which he hoped to make a new Ontario¹⁰, and gossips were giving vent to the rumour that his colleagues in Ottawa were anxious to get rid of his cock-sureness and autocratic ways¹¹.

Moreover, the same central Government was taking advantage of the distress then prevailing in the West to force, under the mantle of charity, their agents thereon. In the fall of 1868 they had sent a Mr. John A. Snow, accompanied by a literary man, Charles Mair¹², acting as paymaster, to survey and build a wagon road from Oak Point to the Lake of the Woods. That was a first infringement on the rights of the Assiniboia authorities, which must have been resented by their head the Governor.

As a matter of fact, Alexander Begg remarks¹³

¹⁰ "They wanted Protestant and English ascendancy", confesses an anti-French historian, Chas. Marshall, *ap. Adam's The Canadian North-West*, p. 200.

¹¹ At any rate, that nomination is viewed by the another of the *History of Saskatchewan*, p. 144, as a climax to a long series of "follies". This seems also to be the case with Capt. Huyshe, when he writes (*Red River Expedition*, p. 3) that they were "perhaps not sorry to get rid of" him.

¹² A writer of no mean order who, "after having received the hospitality of many families, saw fit to ridicule in public print those who had entertained him" (*The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 17). As to Mr. Snow, he "was fined ten pounds for having given liquor to the Indians" (*ibid.*, *ibid.*). For his misdeed, Chas. Mair was horsewhipped in the post-office by Mrs. Bannatyne, the wife of the postmaster.

¹³ *History of the North-West*, vol. I, p. 373; Toronto, 1894.

after the Canadian delegates to England, Sir Geo. Cartier and Mr. W. McDougall, that "during the process of negotiations a complaint was made to the Colonial Secretary by the representative of the [H.B.] Company against the Canadian Government, for undertaking the construction of a road between Lake of the Woods and the Red River Settlement without having first obtained the consent of the Company", that is of the local Government ¹⁴.

From the correspondence which this communication occasioned we gather, however, that, because of the general state of starvation in the country, Mactavish had agreed not to insist on the rights of his Administration in the matter, as the party of the Canadians was known to be bringing in a good stock of provisions ¹⁵.

But the road-builders added insult to injury by paying their employees, most of whom were halfbreeds with starving families, in provisions estimated at exorbitant prices, and this in spite of the fact that they gave them the miserable pittance of only \$15.00 per month, while it was known that the wages from the Government for that kind of work, which Mr. Snow admitted was as well done as it had ever been, was \$18.00 ¹⁶.

¹⁴ The historian of the Hudson's Bay Company, Beckles Willson, formally writes that "while the negotiations were in progress, the Company lodged an indignant complaint against the Canadian Government for undertaking" the construction of such a road. Cf. *The Great Company*, vol. II, p. 291.

¹⁵ Mactavish to W. G. Smith, *ap. Report to His Excellency the Rt. Hon. Sir John Young*, p. 11.

¹⁶ Begg, *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 80. Not only were the wages very poor, but they were paid in goods dearer than the same were priced even in Winnipeg. Thus "when flour was

In the words of Rev. A. C. Garrioch, who is certainly mild in his appreciation, the Métis were then "treated tactlessly and discourteously. Instead of receiving their hard-earned pay in cash, they were mostly paid in goods at stores where they did not want to do business", for very good reasons, as we shall see, though that author refrains from stating them.

This created dissatisfaction, in the same way as Mair's letters to the eastern press against the ladies of the Settlement whose hospitality he had enjoyed, resulted in indignation¹⁷. But it was nothing compared with what was to follow, we mean the innumerable acts of land-grabbing at the hands of the road-builders and the surveyors which we have already mentioned¹⁸.

Nor were the guilty parties few or far between. "At this time, not only was Mr. Snow in the country, but there was a large number of other surveyors. A report was then circulated in the country and subsequently found to be true, that the surveyors had instructions to lay out for immediate settlement the best lands at Pointe du Chêne and at the Red River and at Stinking River¹⁹. All these lands were known as the property of the halfbreeds"²⁰.

All those surveyors were under Col. John Stoughton Dennis, already mentioned, who, with a Major Charles A. Boulton, had arrived in the country on the 20th. of

selling at £3 per barrel in the stores, he charged his employees £3.13 and £4 per barrel, and at the same time paid his men only £3 per month in that ratio for their work" (*Ibid.*, p. 17).

¹⁷ *First Furrows*, p. 197.

¹⁸ V. pp. 68-70 and 75.

¹⁹ Or Rivière Sale, St. Norbert.

²⁰ Canadian Blue Book, p. 12.

August, 1869, and was to play a nefarious part in the impending troubles. This cannot astonish us when we learn that, from the very start, he fell under the influence of that doughty enemy of the original inhabitants of the Colony, Dr. John Christian Schultz, another of our acquaintances who was "very impatient of restraint and in many ways difficult to handle" ²¹. That stormy petrel of the West made it a practice to go after every new arrival of importance and endeavoured to bring him over to his way of thinking.

In the early fall of the same year, however, the Settlement had received a visitor of mark who proved impervious to the blandishments of the wily doctor. This was the Hon. Joseph Howe, then Secretary of State in the Federal Administration, who very discreetly played the role of an impartial observer, and was ever careful to keep non-committing even later with Mr. W. McDougall, now on his way through the American prairies to his intended domain, from which Howe was himself returning.

So bad was Schultz's reputation ²² and so little honourable were deemed his partisans, who would fain have palmed themselves off as the representatives of the Easterners to come, if not of Ottawa itself, that the

²¹ Rev. Mr. MacBeth in *The Making of the Canadian West*, p. 57. Sir John A. Macdonald was soon after to write of him : "These French half-breeds have always been truly loyal to the Hudson's Bay Company and greatly dislike Schultz and that small section who published the *Nor'wester* and are opposed to the Company. I am afraid that Snow and Dennis fraternized too much with that fellow, who is a clever sort of man but exceedingly *cantakerous* [italics his] and ill-conditioned" (*Correspondence*, p. 106).

²² A man "with a very indifferent private character", asserted the future Lord Strathcona himself (*Life*, by B. Willson, p. 176).

Canadian statesman sedulously kept aloof from their intrigues, and especially from those of their chief. Nay, he showed himself so determined to have nothing to do with the disturbers of the peace, that he even refused, it is said, to see their flag raised in his honour, albeit he was himself a member of the Government which their party was extolling to the sky. Some friends there are who are more dangerous than foes.

Meanwhile the unholy campaign of land-grabbing, insult and provocation was proceeding with unchecked fury, despite all the protests of the natives who, often unable to cope with the daring audacity of the intruders because little familiar with their language, were venting their rage in secret meetings, waiting for a person qualified to act as their spokesman.

They had not far to go for him. One day, André Nault, a French Canadian married to L. Riel's aunt and, for that reason, always considered as a member of the Métis "nation", saw surveyors drawing their lines through his land, in the parish of St. Vital, which he had legally acquired from the Hudson's Bay Company and occupied for years. He immediately ran to the intruders; but as they did not understand his expostulations, he had recourse to the good offices of his nephew, Louis Riel, who at once repaired to the seat of the trouble, with Nault, Janvier Ritchot and fifteen other unarmed men.

Riel told the chief of the surveying party that the land belonged to the Canadian, and forbade him to meddle with it. Not only did not the surveyor heed his warning, but he disdainfully directed his chain-men to go on with their work. Then Riel drew himself up and, stepping on the chain, said in a firm voice:

"You dare not go any farther! while Nault and Rit-

shot were hurriedly divesting themselves of their coat, ready for a fight.

The braves from the East had not counted on this. Unequal to the task of coping with such opposition, they had to desist with many protests and not a few threats²³. This was on the 11th. of October, 1869, and this interference of the Métis, with the whites constituted the beginning of momentous events. The ball was set rolling; it was not going to stop until it had done its full work, that is until the rights, landed and others, of the entire Colony had been secured and the wild ambition of the Canadian aggressors curbed.

Unable to proceed with his surveying, Webb — such was the name of the surveyor at the head of the party — reported the reason therefor to his superior, Dennis, who forthwith complained of Riel's "outrage"²⁴, to Dr. Cowan, the chief magistrate of the Colony under Recorder Black, who had nothing to do with such petty cases, while he, Dennis, was writing to Ottawa for directions²⁵. Sitting with a fellow judge, a Roger

²³ According to Maj. Boulton, that surveyor, a Mr. Webb, "had apparently been infringing upon the outside two mile limit which was claimed as hay privilege" (*Reminiscences*, p. 59). This is slightly misleading for those who do not know the conditions which then existed. It was not a "privilege" but a "right" attached to every farm on a river lot, nor was it merely "claimed", but admitted by all as a part of that land. When you write history, you must be particular about the terms you use.

²⁴ British Blue Book, p. 15.

²⁵ As he must have done long before—which shows that the objection to the surveys must have then been of rather long standing—since under date Oct. 4, 1869, he had received the following from the secretary to the Minister of Public Works: "I have the honour to inform you that the Government, upon the recommendation of the Minister of Public Works, has approved of the system proposed by you, in your report dated the

Goulet ²⁶, Cowan summoned Riel to appear before him and receive the combined remonstrances of both magistrates, which he expected would result in the accused promising to abstain from any further meddling with the land surveyor's operations.

This promise Riel stoutly refused to make and offered, says Dennis in his report ²⁷, no "rational excuse... beyond the assertion that the Canadian Government had no right to make surveys in the Territory without the express permission of the people of the Settlement", a contention which we fail to see how the valorous officer could have himself refuted. His own remark suffices to-day to show to what an extent the notions of right and wrong were hazy and confused in the minds of the invaders. Attacks on one's property no rational excuse for protest!

Dennis then tried to have Father Lestanc, Administrator of the Diocese, intervene, but in vain, as the priest, well aware of the universal opposition of the population to the high-handed proceedings of the strangers, was averse to uselessly jeopardizing the Church's influence on behalf of a wrong, which furthermore did not fall under its jurisdiction ²⁸.

28th. August last, for the survey and subdivision of townships in the North-West Territories. You are therefore authorized to *proceed with the surveys on the plan proposed*", which meant the cutting up into pieces of some farm lands and putting several others into one block for the benefit of the new-comers!

²⁶ A Métis, born in 1834, who had Bishop Provencher for godfather. He was not to die before March 25, 1902.

²⁷ British Blue Book, p. 6.

²⁸ The priest refused to interfere because, he said, he "had heard too much concerning the surveyors, who treated the half-breeds like dogs, did not respect their rights, destroyed their property and threatened them" (From a public lecture given at Calgary by Fr. Lestanc himself, March 4, 1900).

Then, on the 25th. of October, Riel was made to appear before the highest authority of the Settlement, the Council of Assiniboia, whose session was on that day presided over by Judge Black, with the Bishop of Rupert's Land, Dr. Cowan, Dr. Bird, Messrs. Sutherland, MacBeth, Fraser, Dease and Bannatyne, all English-speaking except Dease who, from the start, was against Riel²⁹. This unilateral extemporized Court attempted to coax the latter into submission to the natural course of events as they considered it.

“Mr. Riel, however, refused to adopt the views of the Council”, say the minutes of that one-sided assembly, and persisted in expressing his determination to oppose Mr. McDougall's entrance into the country, declining even to press the reasoning and advice of the Council upon his friends, although he reluctantly consented to repeat to them what he had heard³⁰.

Meanwhile pseudo-Governor McDougall was expected every day at the frontier. It was felt by the Métis that, if allowed to enter the Territory without any formal engagements concerning the future having been made by Canada, it would be next to impossible to drive him out without protracted, and probably bloody, struggles with his supporters, who would then be in a position to put to good account the arms brought

²⁹ For the very first and only time to our knowledge, the French members of the Council had abstained in a body from attending one of its sessions—a fact which, of course, was very significant, and rendered *ex parte* deliberations the doings of the same on that day.

³⁰ Ap. E. H. Oliver, *The Canadian North-West, its Early Development and Legislative Records*, vol. I, p. 618; Ottawa, 1914, and elsewhere.

by him from Ottawa. In other words, his premature presence in the Colony spelt civil war.

This contingency was deliberated on in the house of a John Bruce, French halfbreed of St. Vital in spite of his name, and the question was admitted to be one of exceptional importance. This was on the 20th. of October, 1869 ³¹.

Therefore, considering that the Government of the Settlement, whose English members (representing a section of the population not threatened in its rights as was the French half of it) had already prepared an address of welcome to McDougall, would not be disposed to assist the Métis against such powerful parties as the new supposedly official representatives of Ottawa, the natives of French speech resolved, local Governor Mactavish being known to be very sick in bed, to resort to their traditional policy of uniting for self-guidance and protection under a National Committee designed to cope with the present difficulty.

This decision was arrived at all the more readily as there was nothing revolutionary in it. It was, on the contrary, a strictly conservative measure for the French — not an attempt on their part at interfering with the privileges of the powers that be, much less an effort to overthrow the local Government, as had been the object of a meeting held in the village of Winnipeg at the secret instigation, it was claimed, of that arch-

³¹ Prud'homme says (*Monseigneur Ritchot*, p. 67) "in the evening of the 16th. of October", and bases his subsequent dates on that one. But in the British Blue Book, p. 6, Dennis has a note following a report of the 21st. of that month which is thus worded: "Same day, 4 o'clock P. M., the High Constable Mulligan has just come in to inform me, as a matter of duty, that a meeting took place yesterday at the house of a French halfbreed named Bruce", etc.

agitator Dr. Schultz. Then as ever, in order to serve his own interests and further his hatred of the Hudson's Bay Company, he pretended to work for the people who, he contended, should get their share of the £300.000 allotted that body by the Imperial authorities ³².

Because of the subversive character of that meeting and its intended meddling with things that were beyond the normal sphere of action of mere individuals, it was not countenanced by the Catholic clergy, and Father Noël Joseph Ritchot, of St. Norbert, cautioned his flock against its aims, while he had nothing to say derogatory to the assembly held in Bruce's house.

The formation of such a committee, of which John Bruce was elected president and Louis Riel secretary, had no reference to strictly political affairs. It was of a class with that which was put up in 1849 by Louis Riel the Elder ³³, when it was felt necessary to put a stop to the Hudson's Bay Company's fur monopoly. It was "the old custom of the country that when any difficulty arose in which it was necessary to take up

³² Canadian Blue Book, p. 68. "You will, no doubt, have become aware that the half-breeds lately, in a public meeting, called the Company here to account in the matter of the money paid for the transfer to Canada" (Col. Dennis, 21st. Aug., 1869; *ap. Red River Insurrection; Hon. Wm. McDougall's Conduct reviewed*, pp. 7, 8; Montreal, 1870). From other sources we also happen to know that the Councillor William Dease who, alone of the French Councillors, attended the session destined to criticize Riel's action, and was afterwards regarded as the leader of the French "loyal" (*lege neutral*) halfbreeds, was one of the most prominent members of that meeting, the object of which was to censure that very same Government of the Company of which he was himself a councillor.

³³ Along which Benjamin Lagimonière, Urbain Delorme, Pascal Breland and François Bruneau as colleagues.

arms, the inhabitants used to organize of their own accord after the manner they had organized for hunting in the prairies...

"In 1863, when the Sioux made a descent upon the country, the Council of the halfbreeds organized a meeting in St. Norbert and met a deputation of the Sioux...³⁴.

"The meeting of the Métis at St. Vital was held of their own motion, as was their custom. And it is not within my knowledge that they were advised to do so by anybody", declared Rev. N. J. Ritchot to the Select Committee of the House of (Canadian) Commons³⁵.

This unequivocal assertion of the one who knew best concerning the commencement of the Red River Insurrection should not be lost sight of by him who does not want to shift the responsibilities on the wrong parties.

As time pressed and the would-be Governor from Ottawa might reach the frontier any day, the National Committee of the Métis³⁶ drafted the following note,

³⁴ Canadian Blue Book, p. 69. By which is meant, here and elsewhere, the official "Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties in the North-West Territory in 1869-70"; Ottawa, 1874.

³⁵ As per Can. Blue Book, *ubi suprâ*.

³⁶ Would the impartial reader have a specimen of the logic and non-partisanship evidenced by some of the English historians of those troublous times, added to those we have already given? Almost all of them show themselves full of respect for a man (McDougall) whom they know to have assumed a role to which he had no right, and thus made light of the name and authority of his Sovereign. One of them, that ex-military man, G. Mercer Adam, expressly calls him "the duly constituted Governor of that country", while, but five pages farther, the same "reliable" author dubs the National Committee of the Métis their "so-called Committee". Might not some obliging genius, in the absence of Adam probably long deceased, show us what the halfbreed Committee lacked to be a genuine one?

which they immediately sent him to Pembina, just beyond the "line", where he was bound to pass on his way north, in the course of his "wanderings"³⁷:

"Daté à St. Norbert, Rivière-Rouge, ce 21ème jour d'octobre 1869.

"Monsieur,

"Le Comité National des Métis de la Rivière-Rouge intime à Monsieur William McDougall l'ordre de ne pas entrer sur le territoire du Nord-Ouest sans une permission spéciale de ce Comité.

"Par ordre du Président JOHN BRUCE,

"LOUIS RIEL, *secrétaire*³⁸".

The die was now cast.

³⁷ His useless attempts to penetrate to the seat of his intended operations after his passing through the States and his retracing his steps having caused him to be styled "Wandering Willie" by some facetious observers.

³⁸ "Dated at St. Norbert, Red River, this 21st. day of October, 1869.

"Sir—The National Committee of the Red River halfbreeds gives Mr. William McDougall the Order not to enter the North-West Territory without a special authorization of this Committee.

"By order of the President, JOHN BRUCE,

"LOUIS RIEL, *secretary*".

CHAPTER VI

SEIZURE OF FORT GARRY.

The presumptive Lieut.-Governor of the North-West Territories, Mr. W. McDougall, had arrived at Pembina on the 30th. of October, 1869, at the head of quite a little party, most of whom expected, or had been designated, to become members of his Administration. Apart from the Governor to be, his daughter and servants, there were:

Captain Cameron (whom a few call Major), of not any too sensible memory, who expected to become Minister of the Militia, or some such warlike organization; Mr. J. A. N. Provencher, acting personal secretary to McDougall, who was to be Secretary of State; Dr. A. G. Jackes, also called Jakes; Mr. Albert Richards, the future Attorney-General; Major Wallace, who was to be appointed to the Council; Mr. Charles Mair, who had already been some time in the Settlement and was then no favourite with the ladies thereof; Alexander Begg, the future historian, who was then Collector of Customs and did not belong to the "gubernatorial" party, any more than Dr. John H. O'Donnell, who had joined with his wife the would-be Governor on his way north.

Cameron, Mair and O'Donnell were accompanied by their wives and the first by two servants. The same

party comprised also men to look after the pitching of the tents, and to manage a well-equipped camp¹.

As could have been expected of such a man, McDougall took no notice of the halfbreeds' prohibition², and crossed into British territory as far as the Hudson's Bay Company's post, two miles from the frontier.

Meanwhile, with a view to showing that they meant business, the Métis took up arms in the vicinity of St. Norbert, where the highway from the United States was more easy to guard, because it passed through a wood between two rivers.

One fine morning, shortly after the formation of

¹ Before we go farther, and to spare ourself the trouble of entering into too many details concerning the egregious blunders of McDougall and his right arm, or representative in the Territory, here are a few lines from an English author, who seems otherwise desirous of shielding the former: "During his stay here [at Pembina], Governor McDougall contrived to do some things which incurred the displeasure of the Dominion Government... The mad freaks of Colonel Dennis and Captain Cameron did not a little to increase the hostility of the forces of Riel... Mr. McDougall was employing (*sic*) the functions of a ruler weeks before the Proclamation of the Queen, which was to fix a day for the Union with Canada, had been issued. These were very grave mistakes... It is said that Col. Dennis, acting under the Governor's instructions, had sought to array the fierce warriors of the Sioux tribe of Indians against the insurgents..., and [McDougall wrote himself that it was his] intention to occupy the stockade near Pembina with an armed party. These reckless and extraordinary movements created great consternation in Ottawa. Every step which was taken by the Lieut.-Governor and his staff was a new cause of fear", etc. (Geo. Stewart, Jr., *Canada under the Administration of the Earl of Dufferin*, pp. 383-84).

² On the contrary, according to Riel and Lépine in their joint letter to Governor Morris, he "addressed the messengers in contemptuous and insulting language" (Canadian Blue Book, p. 201).

their National Committee, three of them, Paul Proulx, Amable Gaudry and Prosper Nault, went to the priest's house there, each one shouldering a musket.

"You are pretty early for your hunt", remarked Father Ritchot, the parish priest.

"We are not going to hunt but to wage war", they said with a wink.

"Then it cannot be a big war since you are only three", added Ritchot who thought they were joking.

"Bigger than you think", affirmed Proulx, "for many more are to come"³.

They then told their pastor of the meeting in Bruce's house, its results and the departure of messengers with the prohibitory note to McDougall. The priest was startled to such an extent that they could not help reading it in his countenance.

"Are we doing wrong"? they asked.

Ritchot was nonplussed.

"In order to be able to say whether you are right or not", he said, "I should first know what you are here for. At any rate, you seem to be engaged in a dangerous pursuit"⁴.

Wherefore, after due explanation, the clergyman thenceforth acted on the written advice of Mactavish, and ultimately resolved not to break with the insurgents, whose numbers were growing day by day, so as to be able to keep them within due bounds⁵.

As to the pseudo-governor, his defiance of the orders of the natives' Committee was not of long duration. The Métis not only erected across the public highway, near the Sale River and close to St. Norbert, a barrier

³ Cf. Prud'homme, *Monseigneur Ritchot*, p. 68.

⁴ Cf. Canadian Blue Book, p. 69.

⁵ *Monseigneur Ritchot*, *ubi supra*.

which they guarded night and day precluding the possibility of any of his party reaching Fort Garry⁶, but on November 2nd. a party of fourteen halfbreeds headed by Ambroise Didyme Lépine, the former school-teacher of St. Boniface, forced him to retire from his point of vantage in British territory to Pembina, just south of the international line.

There he was to live several weeks in rather close and uncomfortable quarters, the house of a French halfbreed called Larose, one mile south of Pembina River⁷.

Meanwhile, McDougall had found in Col. Dennis a trusted co-adjutor who was himself aided by a Mr. Hallett, an English halfbreed whose intrigues against the French were soon to make him fall into the hands of Riel. Dennis and assistant made a detour to avoid the Métis barricade, and carefully sounded their compatriots in the Settlement on their readiness to rise against the French, that is to start a civil war.

As we have already seen, the English-speaking portion of the population had not the same racial or linguistic reasons for apprehending the advent of the Canadian rule, and they were never threatened in the undisturbed enjoyment of their holdings as were the

⁶ A fact of which a tanner named Walter Hyman, of the Canadian party, complained in an affidavit made before Dr. Cowan, on the 22nd. of Oct., 1869. Therein he stated that, in the afternoon of the 21st., about forty armed men had billeted themselves in houses adjoining Rivière Sale, near the Pembina road, where they lay in wait for Governor McDougall, in order to turn him out of the country, while another party, mounted and comprising perhaps twenty men, were patrolling the highway and country about Scratching River with the same intention, etc.

⁷ *Life of Lord Stratheona*, p. 179, after the Brit. Blue Book, p. 16.

Métis. They were therefore confidently expected to fly to arms, and triumphantly bring the expectant "Governor" into the country, despite the opposition of Riel and friends, whom Dennis naively thought constituted but one-fifth, or at most one-fourth, of the total population of the Colony ⁸.

But the worthy pair, Dennis and Hallett, were sadly disappointed as anyone may see who can read between the lines of the former's dispatches to McDougall. According to the colonel, as the English had scarcely anything to fear of the proposed Government, they were found to feel "confidence in the future administration of the government of [their] country under Canadian rule" and as such willing to "extend a sincere welcome to the Hon. Mr. McDougall, as the gentleman who has been selected for [their] future Governor".

But, they added, "we have not been consulted in any way as a people in entering into the Dominion. The character of the new Government has been settled in Canada without our being consulted. We are prepared to accept it respectfully, to obey its laws and to become good subjects; but when you present to us the issue of a conflict with the French party, with whom we have hitherto lived in friendship, backed up as they would be by the Roman Catholic Church, which appears probable by the course being at present taken by the priests... , we feel disinclined to enter upon it" ⁹.

When a man compromised as was already Dennis feels constrained to send in such a report—and from Begg ¹⁰ we gather that he did not exaggerate his

⁸ *Red River Insurrection; Hon. Wm. McDougall's Conduct reviewed*, p. 8.

⁹ *British Blue Book*, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Creation of Manitoba*, p. 37.

failure—one can imagine what a disappointment to him must have been the reception he had met with, and also surmise that Canada knew very little indeed of the real situation by the banks of the Red.

Dennis continued none the less his efforts to alienate not only the English, but even as many of the French as he could from those, now fairly numerous in the vicinity of St. Norbert, who had risen against the intruder on their own country, Mr. William McDougall who, let it not be forgotten, was booked to become its lawful Governor only on the day of its transfer to the Dominion, on the first of December, 1869¹¹. But this date, because of the opposition of the people, was to be eventually deferred to a later day. Until that problematical day, he was nothing but a private gentleman, not even a Canadian Crown minister, a position he had relinquished in order to become the ruler of the West.

One of Dennis' agents had reported that he had gathered "about eighty of the French party who were opposed to the views of the insurgents", with whom they met in order to exchange views in the presence of several priests.

"Père Lestanc took little or no part in the proceedings one way or another; some of the others were less scrupulous. Père Richot (*sic* for Ritchot) declaring in favour of the stand taken"¹², says Dennis in a report to be found in the British Blue Book. Ritchot lived in the very centre of the insurrectionary movement, and was more familiar with the aims of the Métis in arms.

¹¹ Miss Marsh wrongly says Jan. 1, p. 164 of her *Where the Buffalo roamed*.

¹² British Blue Book, p. 8.

Let us nevertheless note down in passing that cool reserve of the clergyman Lestanc, whom fanatics were to pursue with such relentless hatred, and remark also that the neutral Métis, such as William Dease¹³ and others, were precisely those friends of Schultz who had, but a short time before, been publicly advocating the overthrow of the Hudson's Bay Company government.

Other occasional agents of Dennis were, in the beginning, Messrs. Fraser and Sutherland, two respected English settlers who, at his instigation, made bold to repair to what they considered the very root of the trouble, the Métis Committee in St. Norbert. The ten members who composed it they vainly tried to convince of the inopportuneness, if not the impropriety, of their plans.

That was in Father Ritchot's own house, and, without directly interfering with the parley, the priest did not leave them in doubt as to his own sentiments in the matter. His people always had his moral support.

As to McDougall, since not even fifty men among the English "could be collected for the purpose of bringing" him in¹⁴, the lawful Governor, William McTavish, wrote him (30 October), in the name of himself and Council, that he "should remain at Pembina, and await the issue of conciliatory negotiations"¹⁵.

Nevertheless McDougall's agent, Col. Dennis, dispatched a part of the men he had succeeded in enrolling for service against their French compatriots to Portage la Prairie, sixty miles west. This was the great

¹³ A French halfbreed despite his name, such as were the Harrisons, Frobishers, Klynes, Schmidt, etc.

¹⁴ Begg, *Creation of Manitoba*, p. 37.

¹⁵ British Blue Book, p. 18.

refuge of the Canadians and therefore a hot-bed of plotters against the natives of Assiniboia, a place where, but a short time before (1867-68), an attempt had been made to create a sort of commonwealth independent from the authorities of Fort Garry¹⁶. Dennis' object was to have those men in readiness for any emergency, which was expected to arise in the near future.

As McDougall could not proceed to Fort Garry, he sent thither his secretary, J. A. N. Provencher, a nephew of the first Bishop of St. Boniface who, for that reason, was thought to enjoy better chances than anybody to succeed in reaching that place. But that gentleman was stopped at St. Norbert and escorted back to Pembina, just as another of McDougall's retinue, irrepressible Capt. Cameron, was undergoing a similar check at the St. Norbert barrier.

Arrived in front of the obstacle, with the most luxurious equipage he had been able to find, cocksure Cameron, who claimed that, as a military man, he was used to overcome such despicable difficulties, commanded in the most imperious tones he could muster:

"Remove that blawsted fence"!

But to his utter astonishment, none of the attendant halfbreeds trembled at his growling accents. Instead of finding the obsequious servants he had expected, he saw one of them jump to the head of his horses, turn them back on the road and, with others, accompany him unbidden to the place from which he hailed.

This was on All Saints' Day, November 1. Provencher, though at first badly frightened, had at least had

¹⁶ Under a Thomas Spence, who was nevertheless to become a trusted official of Manitoba. Useless to say he was not a Métis. See, on that escapade of his, our *Aux Sources de l'Histoire manitobaine*, pp. 74-76; Quebec, 1908, V. ill. p. 240.

the opportunity of getting slightly acquainted with the people and their pastor, assisting as he did at one of the Church services proper to that day; Cameron's manners won for him nothing but the ridicule of the Métis, who are extremely quick at judging a stranger and treat him accordingly ¹⁷.

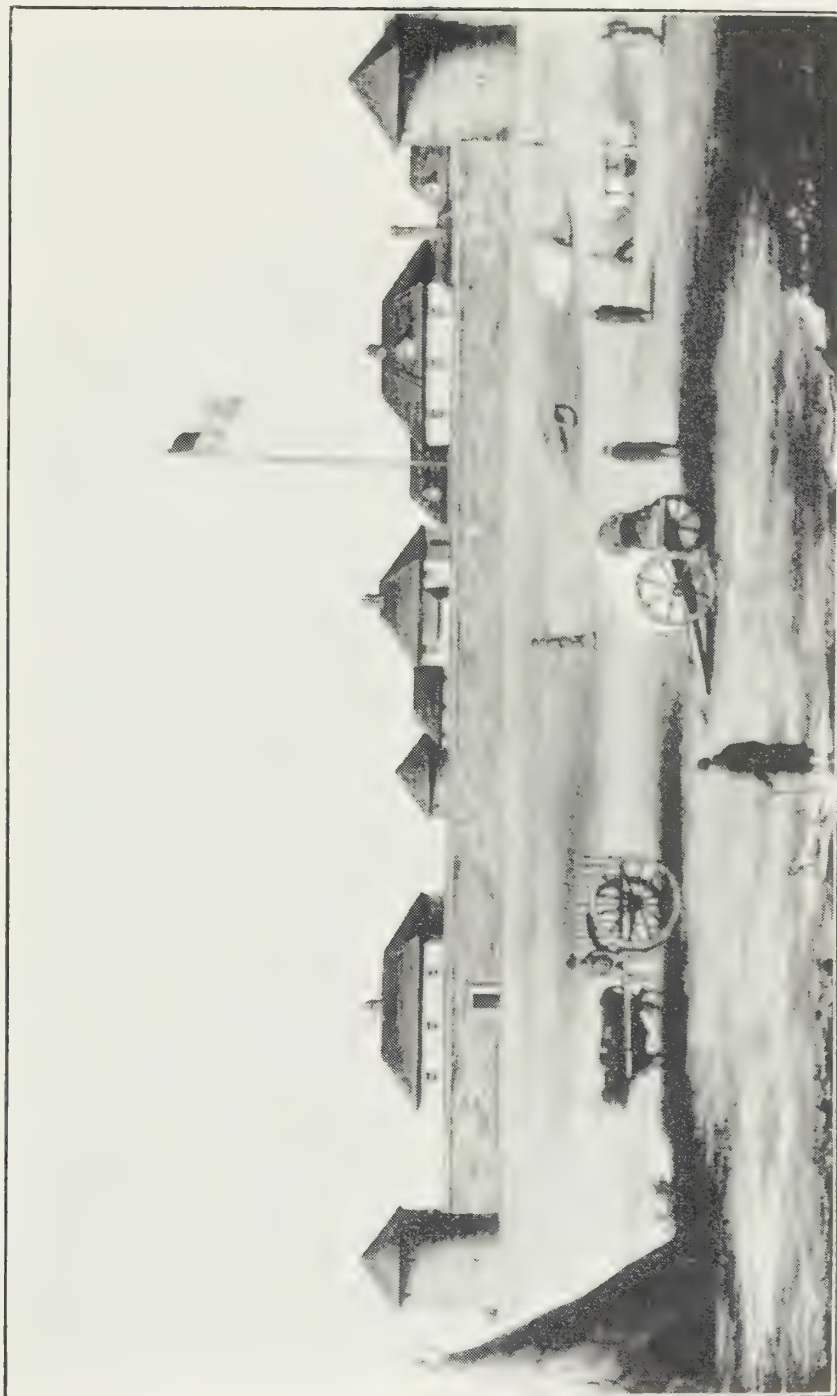
But it was realized that the movement of protestation against Canada's high-handedness could not succeed, or at least that a most dreadly struggle was in store for the country unless the insurgents, threatened in what was to them as dear as life, were so strongly established that they could defy all opposition. The Métis had more or less on the brain the possibility, nay the probability, of the agitators from Ontario, Dennis and his ilk, succeeding in arming the English population with the 300 rifles in the possession of McDougall. This, added to the even larger number of them known to lie idle in Fort Garry, would put a stop to all attempts of the French at obtaining redress ¹⁸.

In this connection Riel was himself to write some

¹⁷ "Ils sont observateurs; aussi sans paraître y faire attention, ils toisent souvent un homme et le jugent avec une facilité et une justesse surprenantes" (Mgr. Taché, *Esquisse*, p. 78). And again, same page: "Cette facilité d'observation est pour nos Métis une source de jouissances véritables, lorsque surtout il leur arrive un étranger qui a l'air d'avoir besoin de se contenir pour ne pas laisser éclater le mépris que le sentiment de sa propre dignité lui inspire à l'article de tout ce qu'il croit tenir de sauvage" (*ibid.*).

After which, the reader will easily surmise what they may have thought of Cameron and his haughty airs.

¹⁸ Even MacBeth has to write in this connection: "It is quite well known that some (amongst them certain old pensioners from regiments formerly in the country) had expressed the opinion that such a movement as this would take place, and had offered to garrison the fort" (*The Making of the Canadian West*, p. 45).



Courtesy of the H. B. Co.

Indian Mother
with papoose

Emigrants Cart

Red R. Cart

Tipi

FORT GARRY

time afterwards: "On the following day, he [McDougall] entered the Province and proceeded towards Fort Garry, with a view to taking up his residence at the seat of Government. The self-styled soldiers¹⁹ then took up a very threatening attitude amongst us. They talked of taking Fort Garry. The knowledge of this scheme, which we were afraid would be carried out, suggested to us the idea of seizing the fort; and we endeavoured to keep Mr. McDougall at a distance, in order that his party, which were so hostile to our interests, might not under the circumstances get possession of the government of our native country"²⁰.

In order, therefore, to avoid strife and bloodshed, Louis Riel decided on a coup d'Etat.

Unlike most of the Hudson's Bay Company's trading posts, Fort Garry was a real stronghold as well as a famous commercial emporium. Its comprehensive stone walls, with loop-holes and bastions, were defended by thirteen six-pounder guns, and stored no fewer than 390 Enfield rifles, with ample ammunition for cannon and small arms. And this was nothing in comparison with the immense stock of provisions of all kinds it contained, and which could be utilized to keep a numerous garrison.

In the afternoon of November 2nd.²¹, the Métis

¹⁹ Among the newly arrived Canadians, there were a number who claimed to be soldiers, some of whom even professed to have their uniform in their new home.

²⁰ To Lieut.-Governor Morris, 3rd. Jan., 1873. *Ap. Rep. of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties in the North-West Territory*, p. 201. This letter, signed by Riel and Lépine, is a model of calm expostulation and evident truthfulness, which shows their people in the light of a population who merely defend themselves against unscrupulous invaders.

²¹ MacBeth says the 3rd. (*The Romance of Western Canada*, p. 115).

leader, with a total following of about a hundred and twenty men²² divided into squads, so as not to attract attention too soon, came down from St. Norbert, entered the open gates of the fort²³ and proceeded to billet himself and followers in the various houses within the fortified enclosure.

"What do you want here with all those armed men?" asked Dr. Cowan, the officer in charge under Governor McTavish, seriously sick²⁴.

"We have come to guard the fort", suavely answered Riel.

"Guard against whom"? demanded the Hudson's Bay Co. man.

"Against impending danger".

"What danger"?

"We cannot for the present be more precise".

Things, it will be seen, had entered a serious phase. The insurgents were now safe against the intrigues of McDougall's representatives, and could easily defend themselves against any attack. Except for the butting in of fool-hardy parties or surprises difficult to conceive, public peace before and during the negotiations they had in view was likewise proportionately enhanced.

²² Some say 100, others 125. According to A. H. de Trémaudan, a François Marion was the first man to get within the walls. Then "he waved his handkerchief to show that the fort was not occupied by Schultz or others. André Nault, with about twenty men, then went in and took possession of the fort" (*Letter of Louis Riel and Ambroise Lepine, etc., ap. "Canadian Historical Review", p. 141, of vol. VII*).

²³ Which no one among the authorities thought of shutting.

²⁴ He died the following year at Liverpool, on his way to the south of France, where he had gone in the vain hope of recruiting his health.

Before we come to the special events which this seizure was to render possible, the interests of truth and impartiality bid us have a few words on a question which historians have generally mooted without ever suspecting that it militates against their own implicit theory that resistance to Canada, or at least opposition to the unconditional acceptance of its rule, must be attributed exclusively to the French part of the population.

We say, on the contrary, that all the natives of the Settlement, English whites and halfbreeds as well as the Métis and the few French Canadians therein, even to the Hudson's Bay Company people, were more or less against it, though some of them deemed it prudent not to show too openly their innermost feelings on the subject. The newly arrived agitators alone were its outright advocates.

The ease with which Riel took Fort Garry cannot fail to strike any thinking student of history as surprising. We do believe that when they saw that the occupation of the stronghold was extending beyond previsions and that the necessity for the Métis leader to feed and pay his men entailed for them heavy expenses, for which, however, they felt they would in time be recouped ²⁵, the legitimate masters of the

²⁵ Both the Dominion and the Imperial Governments were to maintain at first that they could not admit any liability to make good the losses of the Hudson's Bay Company consequent on the Insurrection. Eventually, however, the question was submitted to the Privy Council in Canada. The claims of the Company were: *a*) about £6.600 representing 5% interest on the purchase money (£300.000) due under the Deed of Surrender; *b*) £5.000 extorted as ransom by the Provisional Government, and *c*) £4.164.9.10, being the value of the provisions taken by the same Government. On the 11th. of February, 1884, the

place tired of the incubus imposed on them, and perhaps repented having offered no opposition to its occupation. But it was not so in the beginning.

According to Gunn's continuator, who is generally well informed, they were warned of its intended capture in ample time to make preparations to defend it against any force. Sergeant James Mulligan, at that time Chief of Police in the place, stated in a subsequent affidavit that he "urged upon Dr. Cowan, the Chief Factor in charge of Fort Garry, the danger in which the fort stood from the intention of the insurgents to seize it, and requested him to call upon a portion of the 300 special constables and the pensioners to defend it" ²⁶.

"Not the slightest precaution was taken", continues the historian; "the gates were not closed, cannon not in position, and yet the Governor and Chief Factor knew that a body of men had been in possession of the Pembina road for ten days and had threatened to occupy the Fort" ²⁷.

Machrea noting that lack of resistance cannot help characterizing it as "an extraordinary thing, giving unfortunate colour to the statements freely made that the Company secretly sympathized with the rebels—*sic*: rebels against which proper authority?" ²⁸.

According to G. Mercer Adam, "Governor Mactavish was reported to have said that the Canadian Govern-

Ottawa Government paid to the Company the goodly sum of £10,704.10.1 in settlement of all claims (From written information furnished by a representative of the Hudson's Bay Company).

²⁶ Gunn and Tuttle, *History of Manitoba*, p. 351.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

²⁸ *Life of Robert Machrea*, p. 178.

ment had no right to proceed with the surveys without the consent of the halfbreeds", which, of course, was not far from the truth, since those surveys were made under a foreign authority. That writer adds: "The Hudson's Bay Company representative, if he had cared, might have nipped the insurrection in the bud" ²⁹. He could at least have prevented the occupation of his fort, and thus rendered the success of the insurrection quite problematical.

Adam is no less explicit in another of his books. "The officers of the Hudson's Bay Company", he says, "sat with folded arms when a decisive step would have stamped the rebellion (*sic*) out; for they no more than the halfbreeds relished the prospect of a new regime, having come from their long possession of these wilds to regard themselves as the lords and masters of the territory" ³⁰.

Were we not right in our contention? But there were other reasons for the Company's sullen hostility to Canada's assumption of power, as we shall see.

Meantime, we must add that Capt. Huyshe himself is not of a different opinion. "I must observe", he remarks, "that the uniform success of the insurgents in all their plans points undoubtedly not only to advice and assistance from their own clergy, but also to sympathy, if not collusion, on the part of some of the Hudson's Bay Company officials at Fort Garry. It is impossible to acquit the latter of all blame. For Governor Mactavish had twelve hours notice of the intended

²⁹ *The Canadian North-West*, p. 202.

³⁰ *Life of Sir John A. Macdonald*, p. 355.

occupation of the fort, but took no measures to prevent it " ³¹.

Speaking of the prospective (but never to be) Governor McDougall and his many troubles, the biographer of Lord Dufferin does not write in a different vein when he says: "Nor did the attitude of the Hudson's Bay Company itself reassure him in the least. He openly charged them, and certainly some circumstances lent colour to his accusations, with having coquetted with Riel, and with having assisted the rebels (*sic*) at intervals ³², and in winking at the lawlessness of the proceedings... Acting firmly and at a decisive moment, the Government would have put down the rebellion (*sic*) at a blow. Mr. McDougall thought this, and he was much chagrined at the apathy

³¹ *The Red River Expedition*, p. 8. A clever author, A. H. de Trémaudan, who lived in close association with the Métis and got possessed of some of their secrets, has the following immediately after what we quote in above Note 21: "According to the late Joseph Riel and other old-timers on the Métis side, Governor Mactavish acted in collusion with the Métis. To Romain Nault, whom he noticed one day spying about the fort, he is reported to have said:

" 'What is Louis Riel doing? Why does not he act?'

"And François Larocque, who died at Richer on May 19, 1928, deposed once that he acted as messenger between MacTavish and Riel, and on Nov. 2, took to the latter a letter from the former containing a suggestion to take the fort. Joseph Riel would add—and this is confirmed by the account of Begg and the testimonies of Governor MacTavish and Dr. Cowan—that MacTavish trusted the Métis, who he knew were honest, while he distrusted the Canadians" (*Letter of Louis Riel and Ambroise Lépine*, ap. the "Canadian Historical Review", vol. VII, p. 141).

³² And they themselves claimed it.

and half-hearted way with which Governor McTavish and Mr. Black ³³ acted in the matter ” ³⁴.

Rev. Mr. MacBeth is the only author we know who flies to the rescue of those parties — supposing they need any rescue at all; for every fair-minded person will admit that they had very good reasons to act as they did. Even his confrere in the Presbyterian ministry, Dr. Geo. Bryce, qualifies as “ helpless, decrepit and moribund ” the Hudson’s Bay Co’s government of Red River ³⁵, and adds four pages after : “ The rumour came that Riel thought of seizing the fort... No Governor spoke; no one even closed the fort as a precaution; its gates remained wide open to friend or foe ”.

Yet MacBeth does, in the face of all the foregoing and of documents of the British Blue Book which it remains with us to adduce, to qualify as “ an utter absurdity ” the charge of connivance laid at the doors of the Hudson’s Bay Company. And why is our Westerner so sure? Because, forsooth, “ the Company had parted with their control of the country ” ³⁶, which is tantamount to saying that there was no longer any Government other than that of Riel, and proves in no wise the absurdity, utter or not, of the contention that no power could have prevented them from repelling invaders when they were in possession of the fort.

But we are not through with our proofs to that effect. Open the British Blue Book ³⁷, and you will

³³ The most respected layman in the Colony.

³⁴ *Canada under the Administration of the Earl of Dufferin*, p. 385.

³⁵ *The Rem. Hist. of the Hudson’s Bay Company*, pp. 462 et seq.

³⁶ *The Romance of the North-West*, p. 115.

³⁷ P. 22.

find an unsigned document from some "Friends of Canada", a sort of embryo secret society in incipient Winnipeg, whose communication McDougall duly received and answered, wherein it is explicitly stated that "the Hudson's Bay Company are evidently with the rebels (*sic*) ³⁸, and their present role is to prevent your having any official intercourse with them. It is said that the rebels [against the Canadian intruders] will support the Government of the Hudson's Bay Company as it now exists ³⁹. All the subordinates in the party say that if you [McDougall] have any Commission from Her Majesty to enter here as Governor, they will lay down their arms" ⁴⁰.

With Wolseley's testimony on the position and the feelings of the great corporation at the time, we have the first glimpse of the additional reason for the supineness it evidenced in the matter. "The Hudson's Bay officials residing in the territory were loud-spoken in denouncing the bargain entered into by their directors in London", he writes ⁴¹.

Coinciding with this statement is the well-grounded remark of Beckles Willson to the effect that "Mac-Tavish was resentful at the action of the Canadian Government, but he made no secret of the fact that still greater was his resentment with the manner in

³⁸ Then against which lawful authority did they "rebel"?

³⁹ Therefore it was not against it that they had risen.

⁴⁰ Once more, did you ever see such a novel sort of rebels, who spontaneously promise to refrain from opposition to any party claiming authority, if that party can produce genuine credentials from a common Superior!

⁴¹ *Ap. Blackwood, Narrative of the Red River Expedition*, p. 207.

which he and the other wintering partners⁴² had been treated by the Company.

“Before casting blame upon the officers of the Hudson’s Bay Company for not espousing the cause and defending the action of the Canadian Government, we must remember how the Government had ignored them. We must recall the manner, equally high-handed and unjust, with which these officers had been treated by the London Board. Could anyone with knowledge of human nature expect that they would feel any particular loyalty or respect for a newly constituted body of British and American speculators who, having acquired all the ancient rights and possessions of the Hudson’s Bay Co., now proceeded to deal with the wintering partners as if they were ordinary employees, without any claim upon the concern save for their dividends and pensions ”⁴³.

To render still more plausible these remarks, which are so pertinent that they forestall what we intended to write ourself, it may be necessary to explain that, as soon as they had heard of the proposed sale of the country to Canada, the “wintering partners” exiled in the wilderness of British North America had claimed their own share of the spoils, we mean the pay money which was to accrue to the corporation as a whole for the cession of its rights over what was to become the Canadian West.

Nay, in order to press their claims on the fur-trade magnates, they had even sent to the British metropolis

⁴² The wintering partners were the commissioned gentlemen, Chief Factors and Chief Traders at the head of the different posts in the northern wild country, who did all the work of gathering pelts in return for a very few shares in the Company’s profits.

⁴³ *The Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 169.

that same Chief Factor William Mactavish, who had come back empty-handed: not the least satisfaction! Would it have betrayed much knowledge of human nature to have expected that, but a few months later, he should have gone out of his way to help forward the execution of the agreement whereby he and his colleagues' rights had been sacrificed?

In fact, Beckles Willson, the historian of Lord Strathcona (former Donald A. Smith), of the Hudson's Bay Company, makes bold to assert unequivocally that "had Sir Edmund Head and his colleagues in London seen fit instantly to make terms with the wintering partners in 1864 . . . , there would have been no Riel rebellion" ⁴⁴.

No less significant is what the same author gives us in his work on *The Great Company*. "Was it", he asks, "the Hudson's Bay Company's duty to enlighten the aggrieved inhabitants? The Company which had been bullied and badgered and threatened with confiscation unless it agreed to a renunciation of its rights" ? ⁴⁵.

Added to this there was the personal note. Mactavish entertained for McDougall himself sentiments not of the kindest, a secret resentment at the unceremonious and rather superior way the Ottawa politician was treating him. This went so far that the Hudson's Bay Co. man could not help one day consigning his real feelings for him in a private letter which, after the troubles, was fished out of a well along with other documents which had been confided to its recesses.

In that piece of writing the sick man of Assiniboia betrays his double enmity. "Privately", he writes,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 297.

“as one man to another, it is a question whether Mr. McDougall *should not be starved out* for his arrogance. Only I strongly advise you to risk nothing for the greedy London directory, from whom we are not likely to receive any thanks, but who will themselves receive full compensation for the stores, etc.”

Is that clear? Mactavish ends by saying: “As for Riel, he is every day strengthening himself, and all our work-people are with him” ⁴⁶.

If one should wish for an even plainer answer than those given herewith, we would refer him to the very explicit declarations of him who was probably deepest in the secrets of the Mactavish family, William B. O'Donoghue, the former private tutor to its children. In a letter addressed 26th. February, 1875, to the Speaker of the House of Commons at Ottawa, that gentleman explicitly wrote:

“The insurrection was advised by Governor William MacTavish who, with other officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, also aided and abetted it from its inception up to the very hour it ceased to exist. Riel was in constant communication with Governor MacTavish and, on many occasions, under his instructions. Governor MacTavish fully recognized the Provisional Government; Donald A. Smith, on arriving at Fort Garry, recognized the Government also in my hearing and, with Governor MacTavish, was Riel's adviser during his stay in the fort” ⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ B. Willson, *Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 265.

⁴⁷ Gunn and Tuttle, *Hist. of Man.*, p. 355, note, and elsewhere. O'Donoghue's declarations are so uncompromisingly outspoken and so shockingly unequivocal, that some are tempted to reject them, or soften them down to suit their conception of what *must* have happened. What will they say of the following which, under a more diplomatic form, is just as damaging to the Com-

After this we think we can leave it to the intelligent reader to form his own opinion on the question.

pany's higher officials, *if* we are to admit that they were wrong in siding with the oppressed. W. T. R. Preston has this in his *Life and Times of Lord Strathcona*:

"Lord Strathcona regarded with much uneasiness, fifteen or twenty years ago, the frequently-repeated insinuation as to the complicity of the Hudson's Bay Company and his own colleagues in the unfortunate rebellion (*sic*). Upon one well-known occasion, during the lifetime of Archbishop Taché, he visited Winnipeg, and endeavoured to get the approval of that great leader of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to a statement that the officials of the Hudson's Bay Company were absolutely free from complicity in the Louis Riel episode.

"But the venerable Archbishop quietly intimated that, if any such statement was made by Lord Strathcona, he would produce documents that would settle that question absolutely for all time, upon lines that would create a startling sensation throughout Canada. Consequently negotiations came to a termination somewhat hurriedly.

"It is no longer a secret that the archives in the Archbishop's Palace at St. Boniface contain important documents bearing upon this subject, and it is equally well known in influential circles that, among the papers left by the late Governor McTavish, of the Hudson's Bay Company, most interesting confirmatory information of the archiepiscopal documents is available. The late Archbishop was credited, however, with stating that, unless forced to do so, he would allow nothing to be made public during the lifetime of any of the three who had been active participants in this piece of Canadian history " (*op. cit.*, pp. 51, 52).

We remember that when Preston's book appeared, there was quite an outcry at its publication in certain quarters, though we have forgotten the reason of it. We now wonder if these revelations were not then deemed unpardonable indiscretions, if not damnable assertions. If so, they scarcely augur well for the success of this our present work. But truth before all. We cannot conceive of a divorce between history and truth. On the other hand, the venerable Hudson's Bay Company need not be ashamed of having stood by what was undoubtedly right.

CHAPTER VII

PROCLAMATIONS.

Meanwhile Riel was occupying the fort and meant to remain there until he had come to a satisfactory arrangement with Canada. And to render his chances of success all the greater, he saw at once the necessity of a united front in the presentation of the people's claims. To secure this and be enabled to speak for the English as well as for the French, he issued the following proclamation, the first of our series, which he caused to be printed in the office of the *Nor'Wester* newspaper, in spite of its proprietor, Walter Bown, That Canadian he put out of his own job, under the principle that he who wants the end wants the means, a high-handed proceeding which the gravity and urgency of the circumstances rendered necessary.

Public Notice to the Inhabitants of Rupert's Land.

“ The President and Representatives of the French-speaking population of Rupert's Land in Council (the invaders of our rights being now expelled), already aware of your sympathy, do extend the hand of friendship to you, our friendly fellow-inhabitants; and, in doing so, invite you to send twelve representatives from the following places, viz.:

St. John's	1
Headingly	1
St. Mary's	1
St. Paul's ..	1
St. Clement's....	1
St. Margaret's	1
St. James	1
Kildonan....	1
St. Andrew's	1
St. Peter's	1
Town of Winnipeg	2

in order to form one body with the above Council, consisting of twelve members, to consider the present political state of this country and to adopt such measures as may be deemed best for the future welfare of the same.

“ A meeting of the above Council will be held in the Court House at Fort Garry, the 16th. day of November, at which the invited representatives will attend.

“ By order of the President,

“ LOUIS RIEL, *Secretary*.

“ Winnipeg, Nov. 6th., 1869 ”.

McDougall's agents in the Colony, Dennis and Schultz, Snow and Hallett, Boulton and Lynch, did their utmost to cause the natives of English speech to ignore the well-meant appeal. We shall see that in this they failed egregiously. Nor can anyone sympathize with their intrigues who knows how well the insurgents deserved of the country.

One of their leaders, who shares with Riel the privilege of having incurred the most bitter hatred of their enemies of all clothes, had just joined the latter's

party as Treasurer of the new Administration. This was the Irishman William B. O'Donoghue, quoted from at the end of our last chapter, whom poor anti-Catholic Bryce dubs a "fledgling Fenian priest"¹, Beckles Willson's "recreant priest"², G. M. Adam's "brigand O'Donoghue"³, whose very name acts on fanatics as a red rag on a bull.

Of course, O'Donoghue was neither a priest nor a brigand. He was a young gentleman whom saintly Bishop Vital J. Grandin, O. M. I., the apostle of the Indians of the Far North, had brought from Port Huron to help the St. Boniface clergy and perhaps ultimately the Catholic missions of the West. He had so far been preparing himself for Holy Orders by going through a private course in philosophy and theology, while teaching mathematics in the College. He was not even in minor Orders⁴.

According to Tuttle, Gunn's continuator, he "possessed considerable intelligence"⁵; to Rev. R. Giroux and others, he was "an able man, and a perfect gentleman", though he never was in total agreement of sentiments with his chief, Riel, because of his anti-British leanings.

¹ *The Rem. Hist. of the H. B. Co.*, p. 470.

² *Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 222.

³ *Life of Sir John A. Macdonald*, p. 363.

⁴ Those Protestant writers who so generously endow him with Orders he never possessed judge too readily after the ease the ministers of some denominations are formed. The author of these pages, owing to peculiar circumstances, was ordained one year ahead of time; yet he had had to study sixteen full years. And this is nothing compared with the trials and disciplining a candidate to the priesthood has to go through before he is admitted.

⁵ *Hist. of Manitoba*, p. 355.

Having been so far an ecclesiastical student, he had been stationed in the Bishop's palace. But as soon as the Administrator of the diocese, Father Lestanc, noticed his prolonged absences and frequent visits to Riel, on the other side of the river, he summoned him either to stop those visits, or unfrock himself of the cassock he was wearing and give up his studies. He chose the latter alternative, and became plain Mr. O'Donoghue, treasurer of the Métis embryonic cabinet ⁶.

And what were the rank and file of Riel's followers? A few paragraphs from the British official Blue Book will be our answer.

As early as November 2, 1869, a private correspondent who seems as impartial as well-informed, after having stated that "the muster roll yesterday was answered by 402 men, all bearing arms, and while Mr. Provencher was present about 100 more came in camp" ⁷, goes on to say of the insurgents that "they take an oath to abstain from intoxicating liquors until they have this matter settled, and so far they have strictly abided by it. They have allowed large quantities of liquors to pass through their camp [at St. Norbert] on their way here [Fort Garry] without touching any of it. In some cases, they have opened

⁶ We wonder how it is that those poor authors, those historians of a new kind who shamelessly style him a priest, nay "a Fenian priest" (as well speak of a bright darkness!) never call him Father O'Donoghue.

⁷ Compare with the assertion of one of Mr. McDougall's informants, four days later, to the effect that "the actual numbers of the disaffected do not exceed 250 men, all told" (Brit. Blue Book, p. 22).



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boxes to search for rifles⁸, but, if they were not found, they do not touch the contents ”⁹.

Three days later, another correspondent from the same place said that “ they will molest no property nor injure any individual. A rumour prevailed yesterday that an oath of allegiance was to be administered to all foreigners; but this I have also found out to be false. Indeed the discipline hitherto maintained has been quite wonderful. There has been no drinking, and the men are civil to all strangers who meet them. A night watch of about ten men is put over the town. The chief constable of the Council of Assiniboia has been superseded, and his work performed by the guard. Drunken men and women have been put into the Council goal, and released by order of the new Authorities. The Government so far is generally acknowledged to be an improvement upon that of the Company ”¹⁰.

Such were the men whom that favourite of Mars, Wolseley, styled *banditti* in a public proclamation, issued at a time when he knew he had no longer anything to fear from them! In their temperance pledge, at least, most readers will recognize the much decried intervention of the clergy.

Nor was the abstemiousness of the insurgents confined to Fort Garry or St. Norbert; for a correspondent in Pembina expressly states that “ no soldier is permitted to take a drop of spirits. The most stringent discipline is observed. If a citizen or outsider is

⁸ As there were rumours in the Settlement that McDougall's twelve boxes of rifles were to be smuggled in one at a time.

⁹ Brit. Blue Book, p. 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

found drunk or disorderly, he is promptly arrested and confined until sober and quiet ” ¹¹.

On the 16th. of November, Governor Mactavish was himself writing: “ A body of armed Canadian half-breeds under the orders of their leader, Louis Riel, still occupy this establishment, and, though the men generally are quiet and orderly, and evidently unwilling to give offence, it appears to me that Riel himself is not inclined to be so civil ” ¹².

Riel was, as a rule, not only civil, but gentlemanly and courteous. But Mactavish was sick and therefore at times a little cross, while the Métis leader was not himself without his spells of irritability. Sometimes also he showed himself more autocratic than necessary.

Another contemporary has it, in the course of what seems to have been a most accurate article for publication that “ they scrupulously respect property, and have forcibly stopped the sale of liquor both in the Fort and the village of Winnipeg. Parties entering and leaving the Fort, when unknown to the sentries, are questioned and the watch is maintained day and night, the guard being regularly relieved at stated hours.

“ Outgoing and incoming mails are detained and subjected to examination at St. Norbert ” ¹³.

This interference with the public mails was much resented by easy-going parties, indignant at those restraints which were dictated by elementary prudence in a serious emergency. In the words of an historian who bears no special love to the Métis, “ the mad

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹² To Secretary W. G. Smith; *ibid.*, p. 185.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

freaks of Col. Dennis and Capt. Cameron ¹⁴ did not a little to increase the hostility of the forces of Riel, and McDougall's presence on the border was a constant menace to the rebels (!) who, with a wonderful forbearance, committed scarcely any violence to him or his immediate staff " ¹⁵.

These quotations we adduce not as proofs of impeccability on the part of the insurgents, but to show, by the testimony of English-speaking Protestants on the spot, whether they were a lawless rabble as has been contended by would-be historians, and at the same time to illustrate the ideals they stood for when they first rose.

If later on they somewhat relaxed from these exemplary dispositions, and if their chief had at times to show himself a little severe, it came mostly from the opposition and incessant machinations of their enemies and the danger in which many of the English and a few of the French occasionally were of becoming their tools. In the case of Riel, the few unnecessary acts of oppression at his hands might furthermore be credited to his youth—only twenty-five!—and to that somewhat excitable temperament which, in cases of contradiction, contrasted disagreeably with his usual courtesy and gentlemanly manners.

As to the political intentions of the new masters of Fort Garry, one of the correspondents above quoted from says explicitly that "they are anxious that it should be clearly understood that their actions have been solely directed against the Canadian, and not at all against the Imperial, Government". And again:

¹⁴ The "half-witted unfortunate" of Spectator in the *St. Paul Press*: *ap.* Brit. Blue Book, p. 28.

¹⁵ Stewart, *Canada under the Earl of Dufferin*, p. 383.

“ As to their future intentions. . . , they mean to administer the government of the country in a republican form only until they can communicate their position to the Imperial Government ” ¹⁶.

Or rather, we should say, they wanted, without going so far, to present to the authorities of Canada a list of what they considered the rights of the combined French and English population of the country. Hence the Convention representing both sections, which might have been prolific of real good had not the emissaries of McDougall prevailed upon the moribund Governor to sign a proclamation, the second of our series, which was to prevent the English from adopting the views of the French, who alone were threatened in their civil and religious rights.

If it had not been for that untimely document, composed apparently by some “ Friend of Canada ”, there was, says Begg, “ a great probability that some agreement would have been arrived at between them ” ¹⁷.

That factum of the feeble functionary had been consented to “ more in deference to [McDougall’s] opinion than from any expectation of a favourable result ” ¹⁸. Authors are agreed that it was a weak production, and the French regarded it as a farce. For that reason they usually refrain from giving it in full.

The sick man in Fort Garry is made therein to recite the deeds of the insurgents with which we are already familiar: their interfering with the liberty of travel and correspondence, billeting themselves in the Fort,

¹⁶ Brit. Blue Book, p. 27.

¹⁷ *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 77.

¹⁸ McDougall to Howe, 25 Nov., 1869; p. 47 of Brit. Blue Book.

compelling "certain gentlemen from Canada with their families—a very discreet and not at all compromising allusion to the so-called Governor—to retire within American territory", and protesting "against each and all of these unlawful acts and intents" (*sic*).

Once ready, that proclamation was given to Mr. J. J. Hargrave, the historian¹⁹, who was then secretary to the real Governor, to be read before the delegates of the now impending Convention.

For a convention of representatives of the population did indeed meet, despite the assurance of the Canadians that "in most of the [English] parishes no answer will be made to Riel's Proclamation, or, if acted on at all, it will be simply to send a letter protesting against their [the insurgents'] past and present action"²⁰. Each and everyone of those parishes sent to the Convention delegates of whom here are the names, together with those of their constituencies.

English Members

Town of Winnipeg.....	{ Henry McKenney H. F. O'Lone
Kildonan	James Ross
St. John's	Maurice Lowman
St. Paul's	Dr. Bird
St. Andrew's	Donald Gunn
St. Clement's	Thomas Bunn
St. Peter's	Henry Prince ²¹
St. James'	Robert Tait
Headingley	William Tait
St. Ann's	John Garrioch

¹⁹ Of *Red River*; Montreal, 1871.

²⁰ To Col. Dennis; Winnipeg, 12 Nov., 1869; *Brit. Blue Book*, p. 33.

²¹ The chief of the Indians of that reserve.

French Members

St. François Xavier....	{	François Dauphinais
		Pierre Poitras
		Pierre Léveillé
St. Boniface		W. B. O'Donoghue
St. Vital	{	André Beauchemin
		Pierre Parenteau, senior
St. Norbert	{	Louis Lacerte
		Baptiste Tourond
Ste. Anne.....	{	Charles Nolin
		Jean-Baptiste Perrault

Contrary to Riel's motto, *L'Union fait la Force*, Strength in Union, McDougall and his emissaries had for their slogan *Divide et Impera*, divide that you may reign, as said the Romans of old. The first thing done at the Convention (16 November), which was to destroy most of its usefulness in spite of the goodwill shown by Riel—twenty-four guns fired in honour of the twenty-four delegates, etc.—was to ask for the reading of Mactavish's proclamation. As this alone would have sufficed to annul the very object of the Convention and render its labours illusory, it was stoutly refused by the French, more logical and better *au fait* with the circumstances which had attended its preparation. The times, they argued, were grave, and he who had been made to sign it against his better judgment was powerless to do anything for those against whom it was directed, who were threatened in what was to them scarcely less than life itself.

As a compromise, it was agreed that it should be read towards the end of the meetings.

But the interests of the two parties seemed mutually

antagonistic. The English half of the Convention could not be made to understand the real situation as it affected the French, nor could they realize the true aims of the latter, about which Riel showed himself perhaps a little too reticent also. So that scarcely anything but bickering was achieved the first two days.

Then the Convention adjourned to allow of the holding of the Court of Justice, with which Riel would not interfere, and resumed its sessions on the 22nd. of November. Then nothing being arrived at, a Thomas Bunn²², proposed that the French lay down their arms and that McDougall be allowed to enter the Colony, so that the settlers could present their grievances to him.

This was, thought Riel and friends, an undisguised trap into which none of them would be naive enough to fall. Once McDougall in with his 300 rifles²³, how could he be turned out without the most bloody conflict? Besides, what authority had the would-be Governor to pledge in advance the policy of his future Government? Something fundamental, of the nature of a Constitution for the proposed province, was needed, the securing of which necessitated an appeal to a higher jurisdiction. The mere fact that the leader of the Métis saw this tells a good deal on behalf of his foresight.

So that there was another break in the sessions of the Convention, which did not resume its operations

²² The member for St. Clements, who had previously been a Councillor of Assiniboia, assisting for the first time at the deliberations of the local lawmakers on Jan. 23, 1860.

²³ Which he had taken the precaution to have transferred from the insignificant village of Georgetown to Fort Abercrombie, some 40 miles distant (McDougall to Howe; Pembina, 25 Nov., 1869).

until December 1st., when a first Bill of Rights, or *desiderata*, to be presented to the proper party was adopted by a mere majority of two²⁴, says Gunn's continuator²⁵, "without a dissenting voice", emphasizes Mr. Ewart²⁶ by the use of italics, after Al. Begg²⁷.

The same conscientious author further quotes from

²⁴ That Bill of Rights claimed—1st. The right to elect our own Legislature; 2nd. The Legislature to have power to pass all laws local to the Territory over the veto of the Executive, by a two-thirds vote; 3rd. No Act of the Dominion Parliament (local to this Territory) to be binding on the people until sanctioned by their representatives; 4th. All sheriffs, magistrates, constables, etc., etc., to be elected by the people—a free homestead pre-emption law; 5th. A portion of the public lands to be appropriated to the benefit of schools, the building of roads, bridges and parish buildings; 6th. A guarantee to connect Winnipeg by rail with the nearest line of railroad—the land grant for such road or roads to be subject to the Legislature of the Territory; 7th. For four years the public expenses of the Territory, civil, military and municipal, to be paid out of the Dominion Treasury; 8th. The military to be composed of the people now existing in the Territory; 9th. The French and English languages to be common in the Legislature and Council, and all public documents and Acts of Legislature to be published in both languages; 10th. That the Judge of the Superior Court speak English and French; 11th. Treaties to be concluded and ratified between the Government and several tribes of Indians of this Territory, calculated to insure peace in the future; 12th. That all privileges, customs and usages existing at the time of the transfer be respected; 13th. That these rights be guaranteed by Mr. McDougall before he be admitted into the Territory; 14th. If he have not the power himself to grant them, he must get an Act of Parliament passed expressly securing us these rights and, until, such Act be obtained, he must stay outside the Territory; 15th. That we have a full and fair representation in the Dominion Parliament.

²⁵ *Hist. of Man.*, p. 360.

²⁶ *The Man. School Question*, p. 334.

²⁷ *The Creation of Man.*, p. 158.

what seems to be an appendix to its text, to the effect that, as a special concession to the English, "the French representatives then proposed, in order to secure above rights, that a delegation be appointed and sent to Pembina to see Mr. McDougall, and ask him if he could guarantee the grant of those rights by virtue of his commission, and *if he could do so, that the French people would join to a man to escort Mr. McDougall to his government seat* (the italics are Ewart's).

"The English delegates refused to appoint delegates to go to Pembina to consult with Mr. McDougall", and "one cannot help regretting this refusal on the part of the English", comments Mr. Ewart, who adds: "As a basis of negotiation the list of rights cannot be thought to be unreasonable. At all events, the English believed it to be fair and proper. Why did they not send delegates to present it" ²⁸?

What would have been the use? we cannot help retorting in our own name. McDougall was in no position to guarantee any special and well defined right. This was for Ottawa to do.

And in the face of his underhand manoeuvring with the enemies of the French, of which Riel was well aware, we fail to see what measure of trust they could have laid in his word. As to allowing him to come without conditions, this was out of the question; so much so indeed that the Métis chief publicly declared that McDougall would never enter the gates of Fort Garry without passing over the dead bodies of himself and followers.

This ended the Convention.

Just then a man who should have been honourable

²⁸ *The Man. School Question, ubi suprâ.*

since he bore a military title, a Major T.²⁹ Wallace, of Whitby, Ontario, who had been employed by Dennis in surveying operations—all the highest among surveyors would seem to have been ex-officers, which confirms the reports that most of the new-comers were soldiers in disguise—was not above acting as a professional spy, nay more, as an *agent provocateur*, for the benefit of the pretended Governor.

With that end in view, he indulged in the foulest language against his real employer, in order to surprise and report the secrets and intentions of the insurgents and other settlers. But, as remarks Begg, “although there was not certainly any great amount of good feeling for the would-be Governor, yet no one was prepared to acquiesce in the foul language which Maj. Wallace, in his capacity as spy, thought proper to use in connection with his master ”³⁰.

Are we much wide of the mark when we submit that one who could resort to such tactics could not deserve the respect of those he regarded as his future subjects?

But he did more. McDougall had explicitly been cautioned against the premature assumption of power. “You can claim or assert no authority in the Hudson’s Bay Territory until the Queen’s Proclamation annexing the country to Canada reaches you through this office”, he had been told by the Secretary of State for the Provinces, the Hon. Joseph Howe. “It will probably be issued on the 2nd. of December, and will be forwarded by a safe hand as soon as received ”³¹.

This was written on the 19th. of November. Just

²⁹ Begg has J., p. 81 of his *Creation of Manitoba*.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

³¹ *Red River Insurrection; Hon. Wm. McDougall’s Conduct reviewed*, p. 25.

ten days later, the same high official was advising him that "it appeared to the Privy Council unwise to complicate matters by any hasty action".

Nothing could be clearer, and nobody understood it better than William McDougall himself who, on the 13th. of November, had written to the same correspondent: "Until the transfer of the territory has taken place *and I am notified of it*, I shall not assume any of the responsibilities of government". And he remarks himself that "the leaders of the insurrection... understand perfectly that I have no legal authority to act or to command obedience until the Queen's Proclamation is issued" ³².

Now if we were not engaged in writing an account of the most monumental series of official blunders ever perpetrated, if we were not relating events in which those who worked for justice have come to be dubbed scoundrels and *banditti*, while forgers are now respectfully styled Honourable, would it be believed that, in the face of all this, McDougall actually had the cheek to affix his Sovereign's signature to a spurious proclamation of his own concocting, whereby he made that Sovereign appoint him Governor of the North-West Territories, though he had absolutely nothing to warrant such an assumption?

Then, in the midst of a bitterly cold night (30 November - 1 December, 1869), he bravely turned his back on the land of the Yankees, and proceeded with his Court, represented by Messrs. Richards, Provencher and four others, to the Hudson's Bay Company's House, where he solemnly posted his worthless docu-

³² Brit. Blue Book, p. 36.

ment ³³. "I have resolved to do no official act on American soil", he wrote to the Hon. Mr. Howe—the very same to whom he had most explicitly promised not to do anything as Governor until he had received the Queen's Proclamation appointing him to that position!

He continued unabashed by any remembrance of that promise: "I have made arrangements to occupy the H. B. Co's Post, and if necessary repel by force the attack of any such party as the one that drove us from it on the 3rd. of November. It is surrounded by a high fence, and with a little improvement may be defended against a considerable force by a few resolute men with breech-loading rifles. Fortunately we have with us a few such rifles and a small supply of ammunition. We number about a dozen and are all good shots" ³⁴.

Alas and alack! Such bellicose dispositions were to vanish before the stern realities of life. The news sent him by Dennis from the Red River Settlement was far from reassuring. McDougall could not carry out his warlike plans, and had to return to the less dangerous task of concocting proclamations. He thought, not without good reasons, that since he could with impunity ascribe one to his Sovereign, who did not as

³³ The Métis, or their bard, duly celebrated that feat by a song of which this is the opening strophe:

Of McDougall let us sing the glory,
He is worthy of a much better fate:
This very day he gained a victory
In combatting against the northern wind.
Thanks to a night devoid of the least light,
He did resolve to take a forward step,
And show to people over yonder frontier
That he fears not to face the bitter wind. *bis.*

³⁴ British Blue Book, p. 60; 2 Dec., 1869.

much as know of it, he must be warranted in issuing another in his own name..

He therefore wrote a second in which he announced his own appointment as Governor to "all Officers, Magistrates, Subjects of Her Majesty and others", after which he addressed a third to John Stoughton Dennis, whom he named his Lieutenant and Conservator of the Peace in and for the North-West Territories, authorizing him "to raise, organize, arm, equip and provision a sufficient force within the said Territories, and with said force to attack, arrest, disarm or disperse the same armed men so unlawfully assembled and disturbing the public peace; and for that purpose and with the force aforesaid to assault, fire upon, pull down or break into any fort, house, stronghold or other place in which the same armed men may be found", etc., etc.

A rather novel sort of Conservator of the peace, we should say, whose very first duty is to bring civil war into a country to which he has not the shadow of a right and the citizens of which are at peace with one another!

Strange to say, the insurgents were not crushed by that avalanche of would-be gubernatorial parchments! Somewhat startled at first and silent because of their high respect for the supreme authority of the Queen, they bided their time. But when they had ascertained the absolute nullity of those bombastic proclamations³⁵ and had heard the hitherto legitimate Gover-

³⁵ O'Donnell explicitly blames the Hon. Jos. Howe for the fact that the Métis knew the prematureness of McDougall's pretensions. He writes in this connection: "From [the Winnipeg business men] we learned, referring to the incident of not allowing the Hon. Wm. McDougall, the Lieut.-Governor, to come in, that it was due to the information given to well-known

nor Mactavish declare that he was now deprived of all authority, they thought the time had come to substitute themselves for him, until their trouble with Canada was satisfactorily settled.

Hence, on the following 8th. of December, they launched the following

Declaration ³⁶

“Whereas it is admitted by all men as a fundamental principle that public authority commands the obedience and respect of its subjects, it is also admitted that a people, when it has no government, is free to adopt one form of it in preference to another, to give or refuse allegiance to that which is proposed. In accordance with the above first principle, the people of this country had obeyed and respected that authority, to which the circumstances surrounding its infancy compelled it to be subject.

sympathizers of the French half-breeds by the Hon. Jos. Howe, who had preceded Mr. McDougall to the Red River Settlement, and had said at a private dinner party given in his honour that the Government had not given the Hon. Mr. McDougall his commission, but had promised to send it to him on his arrival at Fort Garry.

“Many of the guests at that dinner were in touch with the leaders of the natives, and they, of course, grasped that news from a Cabinet Minister with avidity. The result was that, as soon as Mr. Howe had got out of the country, the statement was communicated to the Riel party, and they then knew their ground” (*Man. as I saw it*, p. 44).

³⁶ This document as given here is, in places, slightly polished in conformity with the French original, which reads better and lacks such violent terms as “enslaving”, “despotic”, etc. We do not know who was responsible for its English translation; all we can say is that, such as published by Fr. Dugas (pp. 120-25 of his *Mouvement des Métis*), that proclamation is every way more dignified and better written.

“A company of adventurers known as the ‘Hudson’s Bay Company’ and invested with certain powers granted by His Majesty Charles II., established itself in Rupert’s Land and in the North-West Territory for trading purposes only. This company, consisting of many persons, required a certain constitution; but as there was a question of commerce only, their constitution was framed in reference thereto. Yet since there was, at that time, no government to see to the interests of a people already existing in the country, it became necessary for judicial affairs to have recourse to the officers of the Hudson’s Bay Company. This inaugurated that kind of government which, slightly modified by subsequent circumstances, ruled this country up to a recent date.

“Whereas that government, thus accepted was far from answering the wants of the people and did so less and less as the population increased in numbers, and as the country was developed and commerce extended until the present day, when it commands a place among the colonies; and this people, ever actuated by the above mentioned principles, had generously supported the aforesaid government and given it a faithful allegiance; when, contrary to the laws of nations, in March, 1869, that said government surrendered and transferred to Canada all the rights which it had, or pretended to have ³⁷, in this territory by transactions in which the people were considered unworthy to be made acquainted; and whereas it is also generally admitted that a people is at liberty to establish any form of government it may consider suitable to its

³⁷ The rights conferred by its Charter on the H. B. Co. have long been contested and books have been published in disapproval of them.

wants, as soon as the power to which it was subject abandons it, or attempts to deliver it without its consent to a foreign power to which it has not the right to deliver it,

“ Know ye therefore that

“ 1st. We, the representatives of the people in council assembled at Upper Fort Garry, on the 24th. day of November, 1869, after having invoked the God of nations, relying on those fundamental moral principles, solemnly declare in the names of our constituents and in our own names, before God and man, that from the day on which the government we had always respected abandoned us, by transferring to a strange power the sacred authority confided to it, the people, of Rupert's Land ³⁸ and the North-West became free and exempt from all allegiance to the said government.

“ 2nd. That we refuse to recognize the authority of Canada, which pretends to have a right to coerce us and impose on us a despotic form of government still more contrary to our rights and interests, as British subjects, than was that government to which we had subjected ourselves through necessity, up to a recent date ³⁹.

“ 3rd. That by sending an expedition on the first of November ult., charged to drive back Mr. William McDougall and his companions coming in the name of Canada, to rule us without any previous notification,

³⁸ This is, strictly speaking, an ecclesiastical term, which then applied to the territory under the jurisdiction of the local Anglican Bishop, and as such was more extensive than that of Assiniboia.

³⁹ A declaration which is subsequently qualified by the announcement that they hold themselves ready to treat with that same Canada. Note also that the same people always consider themselves “ British subjects ”.

we have but acted conformably to that sacred right which commands every citizen to offer energetic opposition to prevent his country from being invaded.

“ 4th. That we continue, and shall continue, to oppose with all our strength the establishing of the Canadian authority in our country under the announced form. And in case of persistence on the part of the Canadian Government to enforce its obnoxious policy upon us by force of arms, we protest beforehand against such an unjust and unlawful course, and we declare the said Canadian Government responsible before God and men for the innumerable evils which may be caused by so unwarranted a course. Be it known, therefore, to the world in general and to the Canadian Government in particular that, as we have always heretofore successfully defended our country in frequent wars with neighbouring tribes of Indians, who are now on friendly relations with us, we are firmly resolved in the future, not less than in the past, to repel all invasions from whatsoever quarter they may come.

“ And, furthermore, we do declare and proclaim, in the name of the people of Rupert's Land and the North-West, that we have, on the said 24th. November, 1869 above mentioned, established a provisional government, and hold it to be the only and lawful authority now in existence in Rupert's Land and the North-West, which claims the obedience and respect of the people.

“ That, meanwhile, we hold ourselves in readiness to enter into such negotiations with the Canadian Government as may be favourable to the prosperity of this people.

“ In support of this declaration, relying on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge ourselves on oath, our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honour to each other.

“ Issued at Fort Garry, this 8th. day of December, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-nine.

“ JOHN BRUCE, *President.*

“ LOUIS RIEL, *Secretary.* ”

This document has long been attributed to a certain Enos Stutzman, postmaster of Pembina and a sort of village lawyer ⁴⁰. It was not, indeed, the work of Louis Riel, though written at his request by a clerical friend ⁴¹, who, of his own admission to us, composed it rather hurriedly. No American had anything to do with it.

It had been preceded, two days before, by the issuing of still another Proclamation, the seventh in less than a month, which did not become known until some time after the publication of that of the Métis. It came from the Governor-General of Canada, Sir John Young, Bart., and purported to recite how the Queen had been affected to hear of the rising in the Red River valley, and assured that “ on the Union with Canada all their [the insurgents’] civil and religious rights and privileges will be respected, their property secured to them”, etc.

No binding force was attributed to that document, because there was nothing in it to show how, to what extent and which “ rights and privileges ” would be respected. Something definite and detailed was necessary, and that could be obtained only through negotiations with Sir John Macdonald’s cabinet at Ottawa.

⁴⁰ Even Begg remarks in this connection : “ There are evident marks of Americanism in the above ” (*Creation of Man.*, p. 170).

⁴¹ Georges Dugas, a Canadian.

Therefore the *raison d'être* of the Métis' organization and Provisional Government now regularly constituted was considered as strengthened rather than done away with by that very proclamation the terms of which were well understood to be based on the reports emanating from McDougall, which rested themselves on the false allegations of his agents.

CHAPTER VIII

FURTHER MÉTIS SUCCESSES.

The effect of those conflicting proclamations and the measures to which they gave rise were more than ever perplexing to those minds which were not ready to take sides rashly. Acting on McDougall's spurious ordinance, Col. Dennis chose the Lower, or Stone, Fort¹ for his headquarters. Thence he radiated through the English-speaking portion of the Settlement and, aided by such men as Majors Boulton, Webb and Wallace, succeeded in enrolling some four hundred recruits for military service, fifty of whom were Indians—a most imprudent step to take, which was emphatically regretted by the proper authorities, as was the seizure of the Lower Fort and the most dangerous proceedings which ensued². Those men were

¹ Twenty miles north of Winnipeg, just between the Anglican parishes of St. Andrews and St. Clements. It was built of lime stone between 1831 and 1839, in the form of a quadrangle with sides about 450 feet long and furnished with loop-holes and bastions. Constructed on high ground, its original destination was to replace old Fort Garry which, standing as it did just at the confluence of the Assiniboine with the Red, was at that time subject to inundations. Cf. Robert Watson's *Lower Fort Garry*; Winnipeg, 1928.

² "Col. Dennis, with no legal authority, proceeded to seize a fort then in possession not of the insurgents and to garrison it with a mixed force of whites and Indians, which he had drilled on the Assiniboine. He appears not to have thought that the

to take up the cudgels against Riel's four or five hundred followers, and bring on a civil war the results of which would have been simply appalling.

In Winnipeg itself, the number of Canadian malcontents had steadily increased through outside accessions, and was now aggregating some fifty persons under irrepressible Dr. Schultz³. Even there Major Boulton, who had been exerting himself strenuously for the benefit of Col. Dennis, of the Stone Fort, organized a company with Dr. Lynch as captain, a Mr. Miller as first lieutenant and a Mr. Allan as second lieutenant, and made due arrangements for the drilling⁴ of its members.

At Kildonan, near Winnipeg, the same Boulton held a public meeting with the identical purpose of raising troops, as he had done in the other English parishes, in view of the civil war his party contemplated. There he was closely questioned as to the validity of Mr. McDougall's commission, about which doubts were commencing to be entertained. Whatever his answer may have been, he organized another company in that place. On the 6th. of December, this was formally made up and drilled the whole day⁵.

Riel knew all this; but, hoping that time and expla-

moment war commenced, all the white inhabitants would be at the mercy of the Indians" (Jos. Howe to McDougall, 24th Dec.; *ap. Brit. Blue Book*, p. 84).

³ Who was stoutly repudiated by those he pretended to serve. "I am afraid that Snow and Dennis fraternized too much with that fellow", wrote on Nov. 23rd., 1869, Sir John A. Macdonald to Hon. John Rose (*Ap. Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald*, p. 106).

⁴ Boulton, *Reminiscences*, pp. 79-80.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

nations would concur in retaining to him the goodwill of the natives momentarily estranged by outsiders, some of whom themselves meant well and thought the authority of the Queen was jeopardized in the Settlement, he refrained from taking any action to thwart those warlike preparations.

The agitators extended their propaganda even to the French neutral halfbreeds, most of whom, though they would not commit themselves to the extent of rising against Riel, were, under Schultz' confederate, William Dease, induced to keep aloof and abstain from cooperating with his party. All of which, of course, was known to the insurgent chief, who continued to trust to time for the clearing up of misconceptions.

Circumstances came soon to his assistance. Little by little the truth about McDougall's usurpation of power became noised about, and, as a consequence, let it be said to their credit, Dennis' recruits as well as those of Boulton, the most active and able of his lieutenants, felt their bellicose dispositions dampened not a little in their bosom. At the same time, the pseudo-governor's proclamation, copies of which had been posted up on all sides, were being torn down and Winnipeg itself continued to be patrolled by Riel's men.

Nevertheless, even as early as one day before the issuing of their Declaration, there remained a dark cloud on the horizon of the Métis sky. A great quantity of provisions, pork and flour for the most part, had been brought from Canada for the surveyors and road-makers. These had been stored in Schultz's house, and, despite superior orders⁶, the Canadian malcontents,

⁶ Those of Dennis, who saw the dangerous position they were in. But the bearer of his order was captured by Riel's agents, whereby the Métis leader was made to realize still clearer the straits the little troupe was in. This circumstance, of course,

now realizing the insecurity of their position among Riel sympathizers, a few of whom were Americans, had congregated round Schultz and were pressing against one another as wild animals are said to do⁷ at the approach of a storm in the tropics.

There they were, supposedly to guard Canada's provisions against Riel and people. They deemed the doughty doctor's premises the safest place for them. Their inmates were indeed safe against hunger; but it was as a mouse is in its trap, not otherwise, as they were presently to learn to their chagrin.

The same reason which had brought them there induced Riel to dislodge them therefrom. After he had had the house watched for three days, he came to the conclusion that the provisions it contained were gradually disappearing, and some whispered that they were stealthily going the way of the Stone Fort, and perhaps even Portage la Prairie, where were located the most important group of Canadians, there to feed Dennis' levies⁸. To leave them alone would have been tantamount to contributing towards the prospects of a civil war.

Riel could not hesitate a moment: cost what may, those provisions must not be allowed to help the enemies of peace and order and contribute towards

could not help increasing his confidence and rendering still plainer the path ahead of him. Begg does not seem to have known of that capture when he wrote his book, wherein he lays the blame for the men remaining there at the doors of Schultz, Lynch and Snow.

⁷ According to Marmontel or La Harpe, two French authors of the XVIIIth. century.

⁸ "Col. Dennis soon found that he would have a number of men to tax heavily his commissariat" (Boulton, *Reminiscences*, p. 79).

prolonging a division in the population. A man called Thomas Scott, an Ontarian of no very good repute, having attempted to escape from the house where his fellow Canadians were now practically besieged, was captured with a McArthur and that opponent of the Hudson's Bay Company, of whose government he was part and parcel as a Councillor of Assiniboia, we mean William Dease with whom we are by this time well acquainted.

As the others would not deliver up the goods of which they claimed to have the charge, Riel finally thought he must put an end to that dangerous comedy. He knew the Canadians were armed, and the British Blue Book tells us that they "had in the house 400 rounds of ammunition"⁹. So at the very time when Dennis was drilling his troops in the north and Boulton was enrolling more companies in the west, a force of about one hundred Métis suddenly emerged from Fort Garry with two cannon which they immediately pointed at the recalcitrants' den.

They then summoned its tenants to surrender within a quarter of an hour by a message which was taken to them by one of the most prominent men in the place, A. C. B. Bannatyne, a respected merchant, Councillor of Assiniboia and brother-in-law to Governor Mac-tavish. The conditions were clear, and none too palatable: they had to deliver up their arms and be taken to the fort's prison.

Two courses were open to the imprudent strangers: surrender unconditionally or be buried under the debris of their trap. They prudently chose the former alternative, to the number of forty-five, namely:

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 71.



Dr. J. C. SCHULTZ

Dr. John C. Schultz	George Fortney
Dr. Joseph Lynch	William Graham
Dr. John O'Donnell	William Kitson
Arthur Hamilton	Wm. Nimmons
G. D. McVicar	John Ferguson
R. P. Meade	Wm. Spice
Henry Woodington	Thomas Lusted
W. J. Allen	James Stewart
Thomas Langman	J. M. Coombs
D. U. Campbell	A. R. Chisholm
W. F. Hyman	John Eccles
James Dawson	John Ivy
W. J. Davis	F. G. Mugridge
J. B. Haines	Geo. Nicol
H. Werghtman	Geo. Millar
L. W. Archibald	Jas. H. Ashdown
C. E. Palmer	A. W. Graham
Geo. Bubar	D. Cameron
Mathew Davis	J. H. Stocks
A. Wright	James Mulligan
P. McArthur	Charles Garret
Robert R. Smith	T. Franklin
James C. Kent	

This meant, at one stroke, the practical annihilation of one of Major Boulton's companies. As Father Dugas has it, "most of those prisoners were honest and upright citizens, who had allowed themselves to be deceived by Dennis and Schultz. By joining that party against Riel, they had honestly believed they were acting as loyal subjects of Her Majesty... The true guilty parties were Schultz, Dennis, Mair, Snow and McDougall " ¹⁰.

¹⁰ *Histoire véridique du Mouvement des Métis*, p. 117 ; Montreal, 1905.

That was none the less a heavy blow for the aggressors. So a few of them and many writers who have since related the affair tried to save their face by a little calumny against their captors. Riel, they pretended, had promised that they would be only disarmed and "allowed to go where they pleased" ¹¹. Later historians, especially, have eagerly seized upon this plea to make capital at the expense of the insurgent chief.

But the contemporaneous documents bearing on the occurrence which are to be found in the British Blue Book ¹² do not contain one single word which would substantiate that allegation. Begg, who is so complete and who reproduces Riel's note ¹³ to the Canadians, has not the shadow of an assertion concerning any kind of promise. And yet he was on the spot.

One of his prisoners, Dr. O'Donnell himself, in his little book on those events, though he was one of those who were trapped in Schultz' house, calls the whole thing "the Schultz blunder". He says that a deputation waited upon Riel "with a view to their safety". But, according to him, he "would not listen to anything like reason, and said he would fire on the building

¹¹ Gunn, *Hist. of Man.*, p. 369 and others.

¹² Pp. 71 and 191.

¹³ Which reads as follows: "Dr. Schultz and men are hereby ordered to give up their arms and surrender themselves. Their lives will be spared should they comply. In case of refusal, all the English halfbreeds and other natives, women and children, are at liberty to depart unmolested.

" LOUIS RIEL.

" Fort Garry, 7th. December, 1869.

"The surrender will be accepted at or fifteen minutes after, the order".

and raze it to the ground with all in it, unless they surrendered *unconditionally* ”¹⁴. The italics are ours.

Even Major Boulton, because an upright man, though one of Riel’s most active enemies, could not bring himself to speak of any proposed terms in this connection. He merely says in his own book that the day he was at St. James forming another company of volunteers to combat the Métis, Snow went to the fort to tell Riel that if “ he would guarantee that their lives and property would not be threatened, they would retire quietly to their homes.

“ This was answered by a written command — see note 13 above—to surrender in fifteen minutes, and backed by an additional force of two hundred men. *The messenger* who brought the message, he adds, *led the party to believe* that it would be a mere matter of form, that they would be marched to the fort and set at liberty¹⁵.

This was written, or at least published, sixteen years after the facts, when numerous accounts of the Insurrection had appeared chronicling an imaginary promise. And yet where is Riel’s suggestion of liberty in that? Must he be made responsible for the impressions of a go-between?

Yet, even after that, unscrupulous writers, who imagine they have to cater to popular prejudice if they want their productions to succeed, will go on asserting, in books or periodicals, that the capture of those men was “ an act of the deepest treachery ”¹⁶; that Riel “ had broken his promise ”¹⁷; that he had not “ kept

¹⁴ O’Donnell, *Man. as I saw it*, p. 34.

¹⁵ *Reminiscences*, pp. 82, 83.

¹⁶ Geo. Bryce, *The Rem. Hist.*, p. 470.

¹⁷ Boulton, *Reminiscences*, p. 106.

faith with the men who surrendered at Schultz' house" ¹⁸. They will continue to declare that he was a man who "played fast and loose with his pledge" ¹⁹; they will call him "the truce-breaker" ²⁰, speak of his "duplicity" ²¹, of his "insincerity" ²², etc.

Fanaticism is blind, hatred is deaf, resentment will not retract a wrong done the memory of a fellow mortal!

A circumstance connected with this inglorious affair which has never been as much as alluded to in English histories, is well calculated to betray the true sentiments of the "Canadians" towards the French half-breeds, as well as their total lack of foresight. It was on the 7th. of December, a cold day, and some of Riel's men who had just spent quite a few moments on that patch of the bare prairie which is now Winnipeg, thought of warming themselves in the house vacated by the prisoners.

They were quite surprised to notice that no fire was burning in any of its stoves. Apprehending some disloyal manoeuvre on the part of Schultz' guests, they immediately set upon scrutinizing every nook and corner of the place, and were amazed to discover large quantities of gun powder not only in the stove pipes, but in several corners, under the beds, in the cupboards and even in the chimneys ²³.

¹⁸ Schofield, *The Story of Manitoba*, p. 253.

¹⁹ Anonymous, *The Story of Louis Riel, the Rebel Chief*, *passim*, and other authors.

²⁰ Bryce, *ubi supra*.

²¹ Gunn, *Hist. of Man.*, p. 370; also Hill's History, p. 262, which always follows, and often repeats, Gunn's.

²² Boulton, *ubi supra*.

²³ Cf. Dugas, *Histoire véridique*, p. 118.

Can one calculate what would have been the result of a hasty kindling of the fire in those stoves, not only to Riel's men, but, by a natural repercussion, to the prisoners guilty of such treachery, who would have been made to pay therefor man for man?

Riel had now complete control over the country, and though most of the English did not yet recognize his authority, even those who had been made to rise against him were discouraged by his unvarying success. This McDougall, with his anti-Catholic bias, as often attributed to the help of the priests²⁴ and the advice of

²⁴ "Riel never consulted me, neither before nor after his deeds. For my part, I seldom went to Fort Garry. I do not remember having had an interview with Riel alone save on the day of Scott's execution, about half an hour before the execution". This is from a letter to Mgr. Langevin, Taché's successor (18 Febr., 1909) of the superior of the much maligned priests of St. Boniface, Father Lestanc, O. M. I. Those clergymen have been represented as "priests from Old France" and un-British in aspirations. The truth is that, apart from Fr. Lestanc, all those who took any interest in passing events were French Canadians and strongly British in sentiments: for instance, Father Dugas and Fr. Raymond Giroux, a suave and not at all wily young priest, who had been appointed chaplain to Fort Garry's garrison.

In the face of all this, it will be seen how ill-informed were such intelligent public men as Sir John A. Macdonald, who scarcely ever manifested any animus against the French population of the West. Writing one day to the Hon. John Rose, an intimate friend of his, Macdonald said: "Unfortunately the majority of the priests up there are from Old France, and their sympathies are not with us. And to add to our troubles, Cartier rather snubbed Bishop Taché when he was here on his way to Rome. Langevin [Hector] thought he had made it all right, but it appears now that the Bishop has conveyed his feelings of irritation to his representative—a person from Old France" (*Correspondence*, pp. 106-107), in which we make bold to say that Macdonald was wrong.

the Americans, two bugbears he seems to have ever had on the brain ²⁵.

As to Dennis himself, he was writing two days after the capture of the prisoners: "It is a matter of sincere regret for me to be obliged to express the opinion, deliberately given, that as a body the English-speaking portion of the Red River Settlement proper, in their present frame of mind, cannot be counted on in any measures of an aggressive character ²⁶, . . . which may be necessary to put down the French party now in arms against the Government" — which Government ²⁷?

²⁵ "If this story [of the capture of the Canadians] should be confirmed", he wrote, "it would indicate great confidence in Riel and his plans by the bulk of the French and the continued support of the *Clergy* (*italics his*) and the Americans and other traders in the Settlement" (British Blue Book, p. 71).

²⁶ An implicit admission that such aggressive measures had been contemplated by the leaders, while the rank and file, despite their apparent yielding to Dennis' and Boulton's harangues, were not at all in favour of them.

²⁷ Stone Fort, Dec. 9th., 1869; *ap.* Brit. Blue Book, p. 74. In the light of the many documents bearing on him, it is hard to believe that he was sincere and honest when working as he did against the French. His conduct against their race many years after the difficulties with which we are at present concerned proved that he had ever been animated by real racial animus with regard to them. But five days before he was thus writing to McDougall, he had himself consigned the following in a memorandum book kept at the Stone Fort:

"Mr. James McKay tells me the French party say they are willing to obey the Queen's Commands, but that the Honourable William McDougall is not duly appointed and sworn into office as Her Majesty's Representative, and he thinks if they could be satisfied of this, they would offer no further opposition to that

So the poor man, now utterly discredited as well as dispirited, went disguised as a squaw to Pembina, his would-be Governor's place of exile, abandoning to their fate his erstwhile enthusiastic levies, and thought of seeking more hospitable climes. A short time afterwards, we see him making his way towards what was then called Canada, where he no doubt started the campaign of decrying Riel and his people, which was soon to achieve greater and greater results under other refugees from the "Terror of the Greasy Rebel".

As to his master, "Wandering Willie", as the Americans were fond of calling Mr. McDougall, he was shortly to follow his lieutenant and "Conservator of the Peace" in his flight toward the East of his youth.

That was the signal for the debacle of the chief undesirable elements in the Colony. Other agitators left for more congenial points, some for the United States, others for Eastern Canada, others again, like Dr. Bown, for the supposedly cold recesses of the North. That politician, we have seen, had but lately edited the local paper, when he had used so many of its columns in unwarranted vituperation of the Hudson's Bay Co., the representatives of which did not refuse him the shelter of one of their trading posts ²⁸.

honourable gentleman entering the Settlement" (Brit. Blue Book, p. 93).

This being written in his own hand, must not his conscience have warned him that "the poor misguided people" must have been right after all?

²⁸ Having left Winnipeg in disguise, he turned up at the Stone Fort, from which he repaired to a post called Eagle's Nest, in the interior, and remained there during the remainder of the winter.

As to McDougall himself, he thought, before publicly admitting his failure, of trying a supreme expedient. Having heard that Riel was to come to the Hudson's Bay Company House, just north of the frontier, he wrote him the following letter.

" (Private) Pembina, December 13th., 1869.

" Sir,

" I hear from the Hudson's Bay Post that you are expected to arrive there from Fort Garry to-night. I send this note to inform you that I am anxious to have a conversation with you before answering Despatches which I have recently received from the Dominion Government.

" I have not yet had any communication from you or from any one else on behalf of the French halfbreeds, who have prevented me from proceeding to Fort Garry, stating their complaints or wishes in reference to the new Government.

" As the Representative of the Sovereign²⁹, to whom you and they owe, and I am told do not wish to deny, allegiance, it is proper that some such communication should reach me. It will be a very great misfortune to us all, I think, if I am obliged to return to Canada and hand over the powers of Government here to a Military Ruler³⁰.

" This will be the inevitable result unless we find some solution of the present difficulty very soon.

" I have full powers from the Government³¹, as well as the strongest desire personally to meet all just claims of every class and section of the people. Why should you not come to me and discuss the matter?

²⁹ Which he never was.

³⁰ Which was never to be.

³¹ Another untruth, and a bait unworthy, of a public man.



Wm. McDOUGALL

“ I beg you to believe that what occurred will not affect my mind against you or those for whom you may be authorized to speak.

“ The interview proposed must be without the knowledge or privity of certain American citizens here who pretend to be *en rapport* with you.

“ I trust to your honour on this point.

“ Very faithfully yours,

(Signed) “ WILLIAM McDOUGALL.

“ Louis Riel, Esq. ” ³².

It was of no avail. In spite of the Esquire which must have cost the proud man some pangs to write down, Riel never answered him. He had heard too much of him and of his ways; he knew too well his real dispositions and well realized that his present piteous accents betrayed nothing but the distress of the vanquished. He could not be brought to have anything to do with him, who himself could not have done much for his cause.

Therefore, on the 18th. of December, 1869, the unsuccessful “ Governor ” turned his back on Pembina, whose hospitality he probably never regretted, and returned to Ottawa.

The Métis breathed more freely, and with that noisy gaiety which is characteristic of the Gallic temperament, they consecrated to his pitiful venture strophes which they sang in their numerous moments of leisure. We timidly offer of them a translation which is, of course, no poetry, perhaps not even verse, though its meter is exactly that of the original, often rendered word for word.

³² British Blue Book, p. 72.

THE TRIBULATIONS OF AN UNHAPPY KING.

1
Is there in the wide world
Anything comparable
To the tragic story
Of McDougall and train?
I'm going to tell it;
So please listen to me.

2
To our territory,
Now become his estate,
The good man was coming
To reign as potentate.
Thus it had been decreed
By Minister Cartier.

3
With a heart full of hope
While leaving Canada,
He said: "I do believe
That one is happy there.
Faith! What a good fortune!
At last I am a king!"

4
Counting on that richness
With us he was to find,
He had the imprudence
To take not a penny
Even to run across
The land of the Yankee.

5
Amazed at the daring
Of that cheeky mortal,
He now storms and threatens

To conquer the "rebel"³³,
But all of no avail,
Nothing by it he gains.

6
Wandering Jew, wiser,
Had at least five of them
Of which he would make use
In ev'ry case of need.
Surely it was better
Than to take on credit.

7
But, say, no more of this:
Better a short story.
We'll follow our monarch
Surrounded by his Court,
That good King Dagobert³⁴
Traversing the desert.

8
It would seem as if storms
In his own Government
During his long voyage
Quite oftentimes did break out.
Union in which is strength
Was not in that body³⁵.

9
Behold of his kingdom
The soil he is to tread,
When suddenly a man
Forbids him to advance,
Saying to him: "My friend,
It's far enough like that".

³³ Even the Métis were aware of the nickname gratuitously given them by the English, a nickname of which they now make light.

³⁴ A good-natured French King, whose memory is kept green through a popular song.

³⁵ An allusion to Mr. McDougall's supposed temper.

10
Then forced again to seek
The way to Canada,
He will have to await
Money for his way back;
For when before he ate,
He had all on credit.

11
And now his kingly crown
Of the past is a dream;
His only throne now is
A seat with a hole in ³⁶.
But he says that henceforth
That's quite enough for him ³⁷.

That was the revenge of the mirthful Métis.

By way of summing up, we will end this chapter by a quotation from the correspondence of each one of the two English public men whose reliability not even the most rabid Orangeman can challenge. Mr. Donald A. Smith, who was afterwards sent to Red River as Special Commissioner of the Ottawa Government, wrote to Sir John A. Macdonald, Premier of Canada: "The action taken by Col. Dennis is reprobated on all hands, and the proclamation on the 1st. of December, seeing that no transfer had actually taken place, was unquestionably a great mistake" ³⁸.

And here is something from Sir John himself: "McDougall is now at St. Paul's and leaves this morning for Ottawa. He has the redoubtable Stoughton Dennis with him. The two together have done their utmost to destroy our chance of an amicable settlement with these wild people" ³⁹, an expression which leaves us in doubt how much more success he would himself have achieved with them.

³⁶ A... night-stool, implying the effects of a great fright on the poor man. The half caste is nothing if not outspoken and naturalistic.

³⁷ Pp. 137-39 of his *Creation of Manitoba*, Begg has another version, always in French, with two strophes which relate to Cameron.

³⁸ *Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald*, by Sir Joseph Pope, p. 115.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 119. Private letter to the Hon. John Rose, a colleague of Sir John A.; Ottawa, Jan. 3rd, 1870.

CHAPTER IX

RETRIBUTION AND ORGANIZING.

Far more galling to McDougall's pride than the aftermath singing of the French were the public strictures of the eastern politicians on his conduct in the West. He had "fearfully abused the priests"¹, instead of conciliating them and the inhabitants of the Colony which he was to govern; he has openly threatened them with martial law²; later on, he had scared them with the spectre of a possible Indian invasion: "In those circumstances, it was felt to be a wise as well as loyal and humane policy to *threaten* the Insurgents and their annexation leaders [!] with an Indian as well as a civil war, if they persisted in their rebellious [!] designs"³, he had written, and as a climax he had taken the name of the Queen in vain.

So he received a terrible letter from the Ottawa cabinet in which we read: "As it would appear from these documents that you have taken the Queen's name without her authority—attributed to Her Majesty acts which she has not yet performed—and organized an armed force within the territory of the Hudson's Bay

¹ Cf. *Hon. Wm. McDougall's Conduct reviewed*, p. 13.

² At least he had given hints to that effect.

³ McDougall to Howe; 8th. Dec., 1869; *ap. Brit. Blue Book*, p. 67.

Company without warrant or instructions, I⁴ am commanded to assure you that the grave circumstances you report have occasioned here great anxiety.

“The exertion of military force against the misguided people now in arms, even if under the sanction of the law, was not to be hastily risked, considering the fearful consequences which might ensue, were the Indians, many of them but recently in contact with the white inhabitants of the neighbouring States, drawn into the conflict. But as the organization of such a force by you was, under the circumstances, entirely illegal, the Governor-General and Council cannot disguise from you the weight of the responsibility you have incurred”⁵.

Not only did the Canadian Government blame by correspondence their unwitting tool for the colossal blunders he had perpetrated in the course of his hapless mission, but they even had the heart, as a measure of self-protection, to make him the scape-goat of their own mistakes, publishing anonymously for the benefit of Canadians of English speech a pamphlet entitled: *Red River Insurrection; Hon. Wm. McDougall's Conduct reviewed*”, to which we have already several times alluded.

⁴ The Secretary of State for the Provinces, Hon. J. Howe.

⁵ Ottawa, 24th., Dec., 1869; *ap. Hon. Wm. McDougall's Conduct reviewed*, p. 34. In view of these lines, nobody can accuse Lord Dufferin's biographer of exaggeration when he writes: “Mr. Howe the writer of them *appeared* to think that he had exceeded his authority and had used the Queen's name without permission, and attributed acts to Her Majesty which she had not performed, and had organized an armed force... without warrant or instructions” (Geo. Stewart, Jr., *Canada under the Administration of the Earl of Dufferin*, pp. 383-84). What should have Mr. McDougall done to allow that writer to state that he did really do it?

Orangeman though that McDougall may have been, unsociable and overbearing though he undoubtedly was, there is no denying that the original fault was with Catholic Sir Geo. Cartier, who not only took no notice of the articles on the situation in Red River, which appeared in the *Nouveau-Monde*, but would not even listen to Bishop Taché on the same. And then, since he wished well to the natives of Assiniboia and knew of their apprehensions, why send them a man like Mr. McDougall, who could not change his personal make-up to please anybody?

Furthermore, in full justice to the poor man, it should be remembered that Hon. Jos. Howe, who had gone west ahead of him, never properly explained to him the state of affairs such as he had seen it when they met on the prairie⁶. "A great deal of comment arose", writes Major Boulton, "from the fact that Mr. Howe did not enlighten Mr. McDougall upon the result of his enquiries"⁷. Nor should it be forgotten that he was constantly deceived by Dennis' optimistic declarations and the unreliable information emanating from the so-called "Friends of Canada", who too often took their wishes for facts.

However this may be, even in Old England men in power endeavoured to have their kick at the fallen man. Echoing the reproaches of the Canadian Government, Lord Granville himself wrote from Downing Street:

"I seriously regret the proclamation put forth by Mr. McDougall and the commission issued by him to Colonel Dennis. The Proclamation recited that Her

⁶ Pretexting afterwards the little time he had at his disposal because of the inclemency of the weather.

⁷ *Reminiscences*, p. 88.

Majesty had transferred Rupert's Land to Canada, which has not been done; assumes the Authority of Lieutenant-Governor which did not legally belong to him, and purported to extinguish the powers belonging to Mr. McTavish. . .

"A subsequent commission empowered Col. Dennis to arm those adhering to him, to attack, arrest, disarm and disperse armed men disturbing the public peace, and to assault, fire upon and break into houses in which these armed men were to be found. If Col. Dennis had acted on this ⁸, the most disastrous consequences might have ensued" ⁹.

Riel, it is true, was responsible for one death, which he thought necessary to secure peace, and which at any rate could have been averted by the victim consenting to keep quiet. If Dennis had had time to follow to the letter McDougall's instructions before the spuriousness of his commission oozed out among the English natives, or Riel's successes had not forced him out of his self-assumed position, how many deaths would we not have to attribute to his interference with the affairs of a strange country?

He did indeed follow but too closely those instructions of McDougall's, and one question which remains for us to tackle in connection with the worthy couple from the East must result in fastening such a guilt on their personalities, that it can stifle in our breast all tendency to sympathize with the misfortunes of at least the "Unhappy King".

We have seen Col. Dennis blamed in official quarters for having enlisted fifty Indians of chief Prince to

⁸ If he did not, it was no fault of his, but due to the good sense of the population.

⁹ London; 26th. Jan., 1870; *ap.* Brit. Blue Book, p. 174.

help guard the Lower Fort, and thereby co-operate in the contemplated hostilities. Those aborigines being more or less under the influence of the Christian faith¹⁰, may have been regarded as semi-civilized. Yet it was feared in high places that their being allowed to take part in the fray would have the inevitable result of bringing other tribes into the conflict, which McDougall and Dennis were doing all they could to provoke and Riel just as much to avoid.

It would have been an orgy of blood-shedding, untold outrages on men, women and children, as well as destruction of property the mere thought of which suffices to make one shudder.

Yet if the so-called Conservator of the Peace and his superior may have been under a delusion as to the consequences of their calling to arms the Christian Indians of St. Peters, what can be thought of their explicit urging to rise against Riel Indians under the restraint of no religious scruples? Most historians of those troublous days accuse both Métis and English of having tried to enlist on their military rolls other aborigines, even the terrible Sioux, and the charge is serious enough to deserve a few minutes attention.

Let us commence with Riel and his people. If we look squarely and coolly at the question, we will soon come to ask ourselves: What would they have gained by getting the savages on their side? Nothing. Did they need their collaboration? Not in the least. Riel had as many men as he needed, nay many more than necessary in a place which could have easily been defended by considerably less than half those he had with him, and he moreover possessed a large reserve to fall back upon in case of necessity. Far from doing

¹⁰ They belonged to the Church of England.

anything to irritate the English and Scotch half-breeds¹¹ and the English-speaking whites, he did all he could to win them over to his side, which he felt was theirs also. A united front, French and English together in the presentation of their claims to Ottawa, such was his dream¹².

It was therefore to his interest not to make enemies of them by arraying the Indians against them.

It was very different with his adversaries. Under the sting of the fiery harangues of Dennis and Boulton, they would momentarily fall in and offer their services against Riel and troops. But this was only a straw fire, as the French have it, a small blaze of no duration, enthusiasm that would flare up and die out as soon. This is so true that when it came to the question of passing from words to deeds, Dennis "found that fifty men could not be collected for the purpose of bringing in Governor McDougall"¹³.

Yet we admit that personally we gave little credence to the accusations from the ones or the others as to their opponents having endeavoured to secure the assistance of the Indians, until we fell upon passages of two contemporaneous documents which leave no possible doubt as to the guilt of one of the two conflicting parties.

In a private letter to Bishop Taché written by the

¹¹ Note the significant discrimination he resorted to when, summoning the whites in Schultz' trap to surrender unconditionally, he had added: "All the English halfbreeds and other natives... are at liberty to depart unmolested" (Chapter IX, note 13).

¹² "Riel certainly appears to have been anxious for the co-operation of the English Settlement in the movement" (Begg, *Creation of Manitoba*, p. 78).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Hon. John A. Macdonald on the 16th. of February, 1870, that is on the eve of that prelate's departure for the seat of the trouble, on his way back from the Œcumenical Council in Rome, we read:

"You will be good enough to endeavour to find out Monkman, the person to whom, through Colonel Dennis, Mr. McDougall gave instruction to communicate with the Salteux [*sic* for Saulteux] Indians. He should be asked to surrender his letter, and informed that he ought not to proceed upon it " ¹⁴.

Less than four months later, on the 8th. of June of the same year, Sir Georges Etienne Cartier wrote himself a secret memorandum to the Imperial authorities, in which the following damning evidence is to be found:

"It is well here to refer Your Excellency to a Commission given by Col. Dennis on the 16th. of December, 1869, before he left Pembina ¹⁵, to one Joseph Monkman, an Indian of the Red River Settlement, the object of which commission was to give a pretended authority to Mr. Monkman to induce certain tribes of Indians to join in a deadly war against the French halfbreeds of Red River. The language of that commission is of such an extraordinary character, that it was thought proper not to have it printed among the Correspondence and Papers designated as paper A.

"It was only a few days ago that the original of that commission was obtained from the Indian Monkman. It is to be hoped that he has not shown it to many people " ¹⁶.

Having thus fastened the stigma of that odious

¹⁴ *Ap. Gunn's Hist. of Manitoba*, p. 409.

¹⁵ To return to Canada: his parting shot!

¹⁶ *Can. Blue Book*, p. 175.

transaction on the proper heads, that is the two vanishing Canadian pseudo-dignitaries — for Dugas assures us that the infamous commission was signed by McDougall¹⁷ — we must now return to the retribution meted out to them for their criminal imprudences. Lord Granville, the Imperial Secretary of State for the Colonies, went on to say in his dispatch to the Ottawa authorities:

“As it is, Governor Mactavish must suppose his authority extinguished”. Indeed he did; how could it have been otherwise? Riel was now in the ascendant, after the former Governor had declared himself shorn of all authority by McDougall’s proclamation, invalid though this was, and he intended to make the most of it he could “until [he had] this matter settled”¹⁸.

¹⁷ *Histoire véridique du Mouvement des Métis*, p. 163.

¹⁸ Brit. Blue Book, p. 27. Before we finally take leave of Mr. William McDougall, we may at least have a peep at his arrival at Ottawa. “McDougall has returned here very chop-fallen and at the same time very sulky”, wrote his superior Sir John A. Macdonald. “He has been pitched into and ridiculed by the Press unmercifully, and is trying after his fashion—which you know—to put the blame on everybody but himself. We will endeavour to sustain him if we can, but I fear his want of truthfulness and the ebullitions of his mortified vanity will commit him irretrievably.

“He has already been telling the most foolish stories about Howe’s mission, and he has even conjured up a plan among the French Canadians of Lower Canada to keep the British immigrant out of the Red River Settlement, and make it a purely French Canadian colony, and other nonsense of that kind. Altogether his appointment has been a most wonderful failure” (Sir John A. Macdonald to Hon. John Rose; Ottawa, Jan. 21st., 1870; *ap. Correspondence*, pp. 120-21).

“Nonsense” is indeed the proper word to apply to that would-be plan of the French Canadians, the invention of which may be considered the best implicit proof of the existence of a like one on the part of the English-speaking Canadians, explicit

In the meantime this is how he regarded his own position. He wrote afterwards to Governor Morris: "The moment that the existing government was abolished by Mr. McDougall's proclamation, the urgent law of necessity compelling us to look to our security, we proclaimed, on the 8th. of December, the formation of a Provisional Government with the object simply of

evidence of which we have already adduced note 10 of our Chapter V—and we know of other admissions to the same effect by English authors. The French Canadians as such could do nothing in the way of western colonization before the opening of mail communications, and they then knew that region only through the writings of Bishop Taché who, it is well known, had no great faith in its agricultural possibilities. That is so true that, Huyshe jeers (*The Red River Expedition*, p. 212), at his "puny efforts... to check its growth, and preserve the predominance of his nationality".

Now will it be believed that the same great prelate has had laid at his door the very opposite accusation by his fellow French Canadians! In its number for the 13th. of Jan., 1894, the French paper *Le Canada*, after having shown how some Quebec people had tried to awaken interest among their compatriots in the settling of Manitoba, had the following:

"Unfortunately a voice which imposed itself to the French race in Canada by its high respectability and the great dignity attached to its ecclesiastical position, made itself heard in the Province of Quebec. Mgr. Taché was advising French Canadian youth not to direct its steps towards Manitoba. It was the funeral-knell of the French movement westwards. To-day the province of Manitoba is English and Protestant".

The same military author who accuses the prelate of counter-acting colonizing efforts in Manitoba, adds on the following page of his book: "The efforts of that far-sighted prelate have been directed to building up in the North-West a thoroughly French province". The contradictions between these statements are self-evident. On the one hand, Taché is said to endeavour to check the growth of the country by his pessimistic reports, and, on the other, he wants to make it French. And then we have the reproaches of his own people concerning his supineness, or lack of interest, in promoting its settling by his own kin!

protecting our lives and property. On the 26th. December, 1869, the Secretary of State for the Provinces stated officially to our government (the proclamation [of Wm. McDougall] having set aside Governor McTavish) now in effect the only Government in the Settlement. . . Sir John, in his report already referred to, says that the Government, considering the circumstances which gave it birth, had a legal existence ” ¹⁹.

Having got rid of his nearest and most influential enemies, the victims of the Schultz trap, Riel now proceeded to consolidate his authority, which was thenceforth the only one asserted in the Colony. This he did by disseminating copies of his own proclamation of the preceding December 8, as well as of his first Bill of Rights. “The distribution by Riel among the Scotch and English halfbreeds of the Bill of Rights adopted by the Convention, on the first of December, had the effect of making many waver in their opposition to him, and rather disposed to think that he was only demanding what was just, in requiring some kind of guarantee from the Canadian Government that their rights and property would be respected”, says the continuator of Gunn, who adds:

“Many of the Scotch half-breeds were rich, and they hesitated about engaging in a strife where they saw that the men of property would be the first and most heavy losers ” ²⁰.

Riel was aware of this, and he also knew the way to secure, if not their support, at least their friendly neutrality. A little before McDougall’s exit, there were three English-speaking halfbreeds quite wealthy and very influential, because of their trading antecedents.

¹⁹ Can. Blue Book, pp. 202-03.

²⁰ *Hist. of Manitoba*, p. 367.

They were reported to offer to bring in McDougall, by some round about way which they knew.

Hearing of this, the Métis chief wrote to William H.²¹ an anonymous letter to the effect that "since he and his two friends sided with the strangers who had come to create civil war in the country, they were going, all of them three, to defray the expenses of it, and their copious flocks would serve to feed Riel's forces during the war".

The expedient was efficacious. On the morrow, the men protested in the local paper that they had never intended to co-operate with the strangers. As remarks Father Dugas, from whom we borrow the first part of the little incident, "those rich halfbreeds cared more for their flocks than for McDougall"²².

On the other hand, Begg's *Creation of Manitoba* contains a letter of protestation from two halfbreeds which must be the factum referred to by the French historian. This surmise seems all the more plausible as Col. Dennis himself records²³ having met the two signatories of the communication in the house of William Hallet, "with whom [he] discussed the present situation in the Settlement". Here is that letter in full:

"We beg through the medium of your journal to declare to the public, in the most emphatic terms, that this assertion of our having counselled an appeal to arms is a downright falsehood. If Col. Dennis has the smallest particle of sound brains, he must remember that we, on the contrary, pressed upon him in the clearest and most express terms to abandon the idea of an appeal to arms, advising him, moreover, that a

²¹ Evidently William Hallett.

²² *Hist. véridique*, p. 58.

²³ Dec. 1st., 1869.

resort to arms would be nothing but madness, and insisting upon his leaving the Settlement forthwith and remaining quiet.

“ Though always inclined to give hospitality to strangers, and though we had already done so to Col. Dennis, under other circumstances, we felt ourselves bound at this juncture to refuse him hospitality, knowing his hare-brained designs. We halfbreeds feel it very keenly that strangers, after having endeavoured to bring ruin on our country, should try to blacken our character before the public by attributing to us acts and intentions of which they themselves alone are guilty ”.

ROBERT TAIT,
JAMES MCKAY ²⁴.

As to Hallett's opinions and sympathies, they were but too well known to be denied. He had already been temporarily imprisoned for his excessive zeal and propaganda on behalf of the invaders of the country.

McKay was not against the French, but it is probable that he was suspected because of his acquaintances and relations of leaning towards the new-comers. We know nothing concerning Tait, save that he was probably the halfbreed whom Lord Southesk had met at the head of a party of buffalo hunters on July 17th., 1859 ²⁵. But we must return to Fort Garry.

²⁴ Begg, *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 141.

²⁵ This was in the vicinity of Fort Carlton, in the present province of Saskatchewan, where he then resided with his wife and a few children, the oldest of whom was “ a very pretty child of some six years old—a charming little girl whose bright black eyes and pleasant smiles seemed to bring sun beams with them to my solitary tent ”, writes the travelling lord (*Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains*, p. 104).

As to James McKay, he was that companion of the same

It is said that, for those in power, an honest opposition is healthier than unqualified success or universal approval. Riel had certainly met all kinds of opposition, not much of which, however, seems to have been very honourable. He was but 25 and his men half Indians. If the present work were a defence of, or an apology for, his doings, we could have gathered many opinions, even from the highest parties in the British Empire, testifying to a genuine surprise that no more excesses should be attributed to him.

But the arrest of so many intruding Canadians as he got out of Schultz' trap could not help prodigiously exhilarating the spirits of the Métis, and, if we are to believe Gunn's continuator, Tuttle, who wrote ten years later, Riel and his men, whom we have seen re-

nobleman who was so struck with his physical beauty and powerful build. "Immensely broad-chested and muscular", he wrote, "tho' not tall, he weighed eighteen stones; yet, in spite of his stoutness, he was exceedingly hardy and active and a wonderful horseman. His face—somewhat Assyrian in type—is very handsome [so is that of his grandchildren, whom the author of these lines has well known]; short, delicate aquiline nose, piercing dark grey eyes", etc. (*Ibid.*, p. 9).

After the arrest of the Canadians, McKay left with his family "with the intention of remaining among his relations at St. Joe (U. S. A.) during the present troubles... He advised him [Col. Dennis] strongly not to incite the one portion of the population against the other... He also stated that if hostilities were commenced and blood spilt, the lives of the Governor [McDougall] and his party would almost certainly be sacrificed. He said that the other men of property and wealth in the Settlement held the same views" (Brit. Blue Book, p. 72). Which shows that halfbreed McKay had far more sense than pure white Dennis.

The former was to become, shortly after, a member, as President of the Executive Council, of the first Government of Manitoba, then as Minister of Agriculture, and when he died he was the owner of the Deer Lodge estate, just west of Winnipeg.

presented as abstemious, the former being temperant by habits, the latter because of a formal pledge, celebrated their triumph by copious draughts of the Company's rum.

Of such a breach Alexander Begg, the most detailed historian of those events, who published his book but one year after the facts recorded in a diary and still fresh on his mind, has not a single word, any more than have the relations we find under that date in the British Blue Book ²⁶, which were written mostly by enemies of the French. It would therefore seem as if we should, without too great fear of erring, consign to the rubbish of fables emanating later from aversion and spite, or at least assimilate with those excrescences due to the lapse of time as moss is to vegetable decay, Tuttle's "outrageous drunkenness" ²⁷, of which, however, there may have been cases among some individuals.

Another occurrence which gave offence in some quarters is less contestable, nay quite evident and unrepented by those who took part in it. Considering themselves almost sure of attaining their ends, the Métis, now flushed with success, adopted a flag of their own, *fleurs-de-lis* and shamrock on a white ground, which they hoisted (10 December) with great ceremony, the College brass band playing and Riel and others speechifying. This standard was given a place of honour; but we understand that the British ensign was never entirely discarded.

In this connection we consider ourself free to remark that such an innovation is not quite to our taste. We could add to those already produced perhaps a score of

²⁶ Pp. 71, 72.

²⁷ *Hist. of Manitoba*, p. 370.

other quotations from the very declarations and admissions of their contemporaries to the effect that the Métis ever considered themselves British, and that, in the face of the solicitations of Americans, they meant to remain so. The British flag, therefore, should have to the end been regarded as theirs to the exclusion of any other.

We must even confess to our belief that Riel's new flag was in the nature of a freak, as was the name he chose for his new organ, *The New Nation*. You cannot have a nation within a nation ²⁸.

But to judge sanely a fact, you must not isolate it from its environment, preceding and concomitant circumstances. The British flag as such was not known in the Red River Settlement. The ensign always raised was that of the Hudson's Bay Company, that is the Union Jack with the letters H B C ²⁹ on the fly. When the Canadians under Schultz started their campaign of annexation to Canada, they made to themselves a flag of their own, namely the same ensign with the word CANADA in big capitals. As their excesses were so odious to the Assiniboians, the very sight of their standard came to be a sore in the eyes of the native population, a party symbol, not a national emblem ³⁰.

And then, as Tuttle himself has it, "Mr. Riel considered that if one man in the country had a right to

²⁸ Yet, if you take them at their word, the Métis even of to-day think this possible, as they consider themselves a nation, confounding evidently a "race" therewith.

²⁹ With the B forming a single letter with preceding H.

³⁰ "With the deepest regret, I feel it my duty to state that, with very few exceptions, all who have come from Canada have acted as if their object was not only to compromise the Dominion Government, but also to open out an unfathomable abyss" (Bishop Taché, in Can. Blue Book, p. 21).

raise a flag of his own, the same right extended to other men" ³¹. So that it might have been retorted to the Easterners who professed a holy horror for Riel's new colours, that it was their very friends in the West who had taught him the art of flag-making!

In their blind rage against the French, especially their leader, some feigned to see in the white banner of the Métis nothing else than the Fenian flag itself! We do not invent: this can be seen page 205 of Adam's *Canadian North-West*. Everyone knows that the white ground stood for the pre-Revolution standard of France, the *fleur-de-lis* was the emblem of the French kings as the rose is of the English, and, as to the shamrock, its presence on the new flag was intended to please O'Donoghue and friends.

In connection with the first hoisting of the new colours, we read in a recent author a little incident which depicts that "coarse tyrant" of a Riel as he really was, a true gentleman. It is related by the lady mentioned in Mr. Healy's book herself.

Mrs. Bernard Ross was visiting Mrs. Mactavish at the fort when the new flag was being raised in the midst of an enthusiastic crowd of armed men. After speeches by Riel, O'Donoghue and Lépine, the lady wishing to return, Mr. Bannatyne went with her to ask Riel to let her go ³². "We went down, she says, and met Riel near the flagstaff. Mr. Bannatyne said to him: 'Monsieur le Président, this is Mrs. Bernard Ross, and she wants to get out and go home. Her horse is tied outside the gate!' Riel bowed low, and said very gallantly: 'Ladies have the first consideration in war as in love' " ³³.

³¹ *History*, p. 371.

³² The gates having been shut for the circumstance.

³³ W. J. Healy, *Women of Red River*, p. 229; Winnipeg, 1923.

Riel's position now seemed secure—which does not mean at all that it was free from all embarrassments. He had now on his hands about fifty prisoners to feed, though their friends and families were allowed to bring them whatever meals or delicacies they pleased. In addition to this, though he had discharged the greater part of the fort's garrison, prudence had made him retain sixty soldiers whom he had to provide for. This meant quite a sum needed every month.

On the 22nd. of December, he therefore asked Governor Mactavish for £2,000 which, he said, would be refunded by Canada at the end of the troubles³⁴. This sort of a loan was promptly refused; but, feeling that it was a sheer necessity unless he should disband his forces and lose the ground already gained, Riel insisted on it. With the help of his Treasurer O'Donoghue, he found the combination of the Company's safe and helped himself to what he needed, John H. McTavish making at the same time a memorandum of what was taken.

Before going farther, we make bold to remark that had Riel liberated on parole such of his prisoners as were reliable — the majority of them, we think—not only would his expenses have been thereby notably diminished, but he would have gained in prestige with the English.

In this connection, we may perhaps also be allowed a word of comment on the following quotation from our own *History of the Catholic Church in Western Canada*, which we find³⁵ in the *Story of Manitoba*, by F. H. Schofield. "Eventually the inexorable necessities growing out of the prolongation of the struggle,

³⁴ V. Chapter VI, note 17 of this book.

³⁵ P. 241.

the formation of a regular government and the opposition which it met, compelled Riel not only to seize arms and ammunition, as well as supplies of food belonging to the Company, but also to negotiate a loan of money and to force the manager of that corporation to consent to it, on the condition that Canada, which was the cause of the uprising, would reimburse the same company when it should take possession of the country " ³⁶.

Mr. Schofield calls this " an euphemistic account of the affair ". A euphemism is a figure of speech by which a phrase more agreeable is substituted for one more accurately expressive of what is meant. Our statement, we hold, is more accurate than that of those historians who content themselves with saying, for instance: Riel extorted a large sum of money from the Hudson's Bay Company, because a brutal fact stated without the proper explanation as to cause or circumstance is quite often misleading.

Or could it be that Schofield hints thereby at some

³⁶ After consulting our *Hist. of the Cath. Church in W. Canada* (two vols.), our *Histoire de l'Eglise Catholique dans l'Ouest Canadien* (4 vols.), and our *Dictionnaire Historique des Canadiens et des Métis français de l'Ouest*, we could not locate that quotation of the English author, who never gives any reference in the course of his big book. We had to go to a smaller, though none the less important, work of ours, *Aux Sources de l'Histoire manitobaine*, to finally fall upon the equivalent text, p. 64.

This exemplifies perhaps the least of the disadvantages consequent on the omission of all references in a book which would fain be taken seriously. Such works as are shorn of all references or foot-notes have scarcely any scientific value whatever. They contain apparently nothing but the opinions of one man, the author, which may be devoid of all weight, a man who states facts, real or pretended, for the accuracy of which there is no warrant and which, for the lack of references, cannot be controlled.

hidden or dishonest use of the money? He ought to know, as everyone knows, that, poor before he entered the field of politics, Riel was not any richer when he left it.

In the present case we might add that another reason rendered his high-handed proceeding expedient, if not necessary. A political movement like Riel's without an organ is a well constituted body without a voice. The virtual head of the *de facto* Government—he was ostensibly but its secretary as yet—he had suppressed the *Nor'wester*, because of the refusal of its owner to print his proclamation, and another newspaper, the *Red River Pioneer*, had been nipped in the bud when the Métis leader bought its plant before one copy of the same was issued. This plant was up to date, and £550 sterling had to be paid for it.

It served, in the course of time, to print the *New Nation*, which became the organ of the Provisional Government, and, for that reason, is greeted as the "rebel rag" by an "impartial" (?!) historian. "In this official newspaper of the insurgent chiefs", he says, "the whole miserable farce of playing at Government may be read, with pitiful gasconade of Gallic cockiness, Fenian sedition and halfbreed insolence"³⁷. How the constituted authorities of the country came to trifle and temporise with all this treason, and suffered themselves to be bullied by the presumption of vain braggarts and arrant cowards in this wretched fiasco, will remain a humiliating reflection to the Canadian patriot"³⁸.

³⁷ What about English petty spite and jealousy, soreness at failure and consequent childish name-giving? We can scarcely imagine that all this is typically British.

³⁸ Adam, *The Canadian North-West*, pp. 204-05. Always the sourness of the defeated opponent!

Now that the reader comes to have a fairly good insight into the whole affair, we should have deemed ourself guilty of a crime to have hidden from view, that gem of an appreciation. Imagine the idea, the blatant presumption of mere halfbreeds, and French halfbreeds too, having a newspaper at their beck and call when the representatives of "the superior race" had none! And what pitiful blockheads must have been Lord Granville and Sir Frederic Rogers, of Old London, who would not tire of proclaiming that the natives of Red River must not be coerced into accepting Canada's sovereignty over them! Of course, those fossil statesmen of the British metropolis could not lay claim to the possession of the lights illuminating "ex-Capt. G. Mercer Adam".

As if to make matters worse, Riel now thought fit to assume the title of him whose functions he had discharged from the very start. On Christmas Day, 1869, he became President of the Provisional Government; O'Donoghue remained at his post of Treasurer; A. G. B. Bannatyne, a white man as the latter, was entrusted with the direction of Mail matters, and Ambroise D. Lépine, a halfbreed as we know, was made Adjutant-General, or Chief of the Militia.

At the same time, councillors were appointed, whose office it was to give their advice on the questions of the day.

CHAPTER X

PARLEYING.

Riel had now reached the climax of political eminence in the little world of Red River. He has always been represented as vain and autocratic by the authors of historical books on that country. To mention but one of them who is among the mildest in his evident hatred of him, the Rev. Mr. MacBeth delights in telling us into what "a violent rage" he would at times be thrown¹, of what "inordinate vanity", he would usually be guilty², how terribly "enraged" he showed himself on all occasions³. The same charitable clergyman mentions elsewhere his "arbitrary methods"⁴ and ends by showing us what "a madman" he really was⁵.

We would not go the length of asserting that, at 25, after he had, in three months, sprung from nothing to practically everything, he was a paragon of humility or of meekness. Yet if we are to judge him by the very first act which is recorded of him after his elevation to the presidency, we do not find much of that vain-

¹ *The Romance of the Canadian West*, p. 151.

² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 157. For a madman, he succeeded mighty well. Such lucky madmen are rather rare to-day.

glory and autocracy which are usually given as his chief characteristics.

The season for unholy gratifications, especially among the French ⁶, was close at hand, when excesses in drinking might degenerate into dangerous breaches of the public peace. Hence the new President of the Provisional Government, with his wonted foresight, did not deem it beneath his dignity to personally resort to a special proceeding which the abnormal situation of the Colony would seem to have warranted.

And this is how he exemplified those "arbitrary methods" blamed on him by Mr. MacBeth, and what he did to show what a "madman" he was. On the 27th. of December, 1869, he wrote the following to the several saloon-keepers in and around the town of Winnipeg. The reader is prepared for his autocratic, arbitrary and mad-like ways: he cannot be shocked at this token of his rudeness:

"Sir,

"I do respectfully pray you to let nobody have any liquor at your place from this date up to the tenth of January. By doing so, you will grant the country a great favour, and very likely preserve it from great misfortune.

"Yours very respectfully.

"LOUIS RIEL."

Such was the "violent rage" and "arbitrary methods" of Mr. MacBeth's "madman". What a "tyranny", and what a "drunkard" he must have been! He surely wanted all the liquor for himself and people!...

⁶ Who indulge on and after New Year's Day in the dissipation and excesses too often prevalent at Christmas among the English.

Meanwhile, through the return east of would-be Governor McDougall and his lieutenant Dennis, and because they had at last come to realize their almost unbelievable misdeeds, the Canadian authorities had awakened to the seriousness of the situation by the banks of the Red. As a consequence, they had dispatched three Commissioners, or special agents, of whom, however, only one was armed with proper credentials and powers, the other two being apparently intended more to prepare the way for him and to use whatever persuading influence they might derive from identity of race and religious beliefs with the vast majority of the insurgents.

These were Vicar-General Jean-Baptiste Thibault and Colonel Charles de Salaberry. The former was a venerable and highly esteemed priest who, for thirty-nine years, had toiled among Indians and Métis in the country between the Red and Assiniboine and the Far West. He had returned east but a short time before with the title of Vicar-General of St. Boniface ⁷.

Father Thibault had for a companion the son of the hero of Chateauguay ⁸, of whom little enough is known, save that he was an accomplished gentleman and an altogether lovable character, who had himself already been in the West ⁹. Yet when he arrived on the 24th. of December at Pembina, where everybody

⁷ Of all the priests who laboured in the West previous to the advent of the Oblates, Father Thibault was the one who stayed there the longest. Hence his presumed influence over the natives thereof.

⁸ Where, with a very small force he beat the Americans in 1813.

⁹ "He understands the halfbreeds thoroughly, and was quite a hero among them while he lived there" (Sir John A. Macdonald to Hon. John Rose; Ottawa, Nov. 23rd., 1869; V. *Corre-*

coming from Canada was looked upon with suspicion, de Salaberry had to stay out of the territory until the 5th. of January ¹⁰, while the Vicar-General was allowed to proceed without delay to St. Boniface.

Both priest and layman had indeed official papers from Ottawa, but none of them, as we have hinted, authorized them to make any specific or detailed promises to the people of Assiniboia. Perhaps the most telling passage of the Instructions to the Vicar-General was this, which emanated from the Secretary of State for the Provinces:

“The only two persons that Mr. McDougall was formally instructed to call to his aid were Governor Mactavish and Judge Black, who were known to be universally respected, and any subsequent selections were to be first reported here, with *grounds of his*

spondence, p. 107). Col. Charles René Léonidas de Salaberry was born at Chambly, P. Q., on the 27th. of August, 1820. In 1857-58, he took part in Simon Dawson's surveying expedition to the Red River, being then at the head of its commissariat. It must have been then that he made the acquaintance, and gained the friendship, of the French halfbreeds.

¹⁰ Father Thibault says the 6th. in his Report (Brit. Blue Book, p. 125), but he probably means there that he could not see him before that date. Born on the 14th. of Dec., 1810, at St. Joseph of Lévis, he had first arrived at St. Boniface in the summer of 1833, and been ordained there on the 8th. of Sept. of the same year. Thenceforth he had worked strenuously yet noiselessly among the Métis of the Assiniboine valley and the Crees and Blackfeet of the Upper Saskatchewan, as well as the Déné Indians of the North. Few missionaries have turned out more persistent work without seeking the plaudits of the world, for he was of a retiring disposition despite his fine presence.

In the winter of 1862-63, we see him with the Métis of St. François-Xavier helping to reconstruct Bishop Taché's cathedral burnt down in Dec., 1860, and he does not seem to have left his post by the Assiniboine before the spring of 1868.

belief [italics in original] that they stood equally high in the confidence and affections of the people" ¹¹.

This must have been pleasant reading to Riel and councillors. Yet the two French Commissioners' lack of authority to guarantee any measure in the future or grant any demand of the Assiniboians in the name of Canada, doomed to failure any intervention from them.

This intervention could only have, and had indeed, some sort of moral effect, as is attested by modest Thibault's Report, which puts it all to the credit of his companion. "Colonel de Salaberry's presence here ¹² and the loyal conduct of that amiable gentleman have not a little contributed to revive our ancient sympathies for the land of our fathers". He then writes: "I constantly heard it said: 'Oh! if Canada had sent in from the first men like this gentleman, we should be satisfied and should feel that they really loved us and desired our welfare'".

"Yes", I said, "you are right, my good friends, but the Government knows all that, and I am satisfied that it is disposed to do anything in its power to content you and make you happy" ¹³.

The practical result of the two French Commissioners' mission was the idea they suggested to the Métis of sending delegates to treat with the Ottawa Government.

Much more was accomplished by another party, a Mr. Donald A. Smith, who was later to exchange his plebeian name for that of Lord Strathcona, and Mount

¹¹ Ap. Begg., *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 213.

¹² Saint-Boniface.

¹³ Brit. Blue Book, p. 125.

Royal ¹⁴. As he was the head of the Hudson's Bay Company in America, he had every right to be commissioned by Canada to a country which but yesterday, nay even then, belonged to his corporation. Mr. Smith reached Fort Garry with the title of Special Commissioner of Canada, on the 27th. of December 1869, just one day after Father Thibault had arrived at St. Boniface.

He was armed with regular credentials and some power to treat with the people of the Settlement, though, not knowing whether he would be allowed or not to communicate his papers to the proper party, he had, as a shrewd Scot that he was, taken the precaution of leaving them in Pembina, in the care of Mr. J. A. N. Provencher, the "late Governor" McDougall's secretary.

So the wily diplomat bided his time, and for three weeks did nothing to further the object of his mission, which was not to be an unmixed boon. In consequence of his studied inactivity, Riel's paper, *The New Nation*, which had made its first bow to the public on January 7th., 1870, announced his arrival as merely that of the "General Manager of the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company in Canada", whose object was "to assist

¹⁴ Lord Strathcona is too well known to require more than the following biographical notes. He was born Aug. 6, 1820, at Archiestown, Scotland, and emigrated to Canada when 18. Having then entered the Hudson's Bay Company, he spent quite a number of years among the isolated Indians of Labrador and Hudson Bay. In 1868, the year before the breaking out of the Red River Insurrection, he was transferred to Montreal, where he became general manager, and afterwards Governor, of his corporation. His long life afterwards was passed in the fulfilment of various honourable and profitable offices, some of them of a political nature, and he did not die, rich and respected of all, until Jan. 21, 1914.

Governor Mactavish during his illness in the management of the Company's affairs ”.

Meantime, though well treated at the Fort, Smith was closely watched, and not allowed to have any secret communications with the people at large, which, it is alleged, did not prevent him from indisposing his visitors against Riel and his aims. These, of course, he knew but imperfectly, and only from the wild impressions then prevailing among the English. And all this in spite of his guards, who perhaps did not understand much better the language he used.

Outside of the Fort proper, some of Riel's guards must then have been more or less napping, for, on the 9th. of January, a number of the prisoners captured in Schultz' house escaped from the Hudson's Bay Co. prison, situated without the stone wall enclosure. Among them were Thomas Scot, the rabid Orangeman; Charles Mair, the poet and insulter of the Red River ladies ¹⁵, and Walton T. Hyman, the denunciator of the first insurgents at St. Norbert.

The night was intensely cold; yet the two first men managed to make good their escape as far as Portage la Prairie, some sixty miles west. But Hyman having lost his way, wandered aimlessly until his feet were frozen, when he took refuge in a house the inmates of which had the heart to betray him to the Métis authorities. He was recaptured and incarcerated in the more secure jail of Fort Garry, where Schultz and others were confined. Seven of those who had escaped were recaptured ¹⁶.

To return to Special Commissioner Smith. His

¹⁵ Who had been horsewhipped by one of them, and escaped from custody without hat, coat or overcoat.

¹⁶ V. Gunn's *Hist. of Manitoba*, p. 377.

natural ability and capacity for self-restraint in connection with his stay in Fort Garry, as well as the success he achieved in his dealings with the Red River people by "undermining the Dictator" ¹⁷ have been extolled to the sky, and not without some show of reason, by most historians, evidently delighted at his attempts to weaken Riel's position in the Colony. From the point of view of division and disintegration, Ottawa's representative was undoubtedly successful, at least for a time; but is that real statesmanship? Destructive methods are rather to be deprecated, especially when they are the seed of disunion and mutual antipathies in a population already composed of racially antagonistic elements. Constructive efforts making for union and mutual forbearance are much more meritorious.

Then, to be quite frank, we will make bold to assert, and are sure to be able to prove, that in Fort Garry's young "Dictator", even Donald A. Smith found a man who was to be a real match for his own Scottish shrewdness.

Take, for instance, the question of the latter's official organ, the newspaper which, we have seen, had commenced its mission after the advent of the Special Commissioner. It cannot be denied that Riel was, by feelings and education, strongly pro-British. Yet, not only did he allow himself to be tempted by offers of vast sums of American money (which he loyally refused) and the promise of large numbers of men and arms, which he unostentatiously spurned away ¹⁸, but in order to impress Smith with a sense of what he was risking if he showed himself deaf to the demands

¹⁷ Title of one of the chapters of his *Life* by Beckles Willson.

¹⁸ V. Note 49 Chapter IV of this volume.

of leader and led, he intrusted the direction of his paper to an American with unconcealed annexationist proclivities.

Smith was caught by the dodge, and never suspected the reason of this—any more, of course, than subsequent historians. Nevertheless, had the latter cared to see and report for posterity more than appeared on the surface, they could have found, in a quasi-official volume made up of stenographed sworn depositions, the statement of one of the most prominent citizens of Winnipeg at the time of the Red River troubles, A. G. B. Bannatyne, which we have already furnished the reader in the course of our fourth chapter¹⁹.

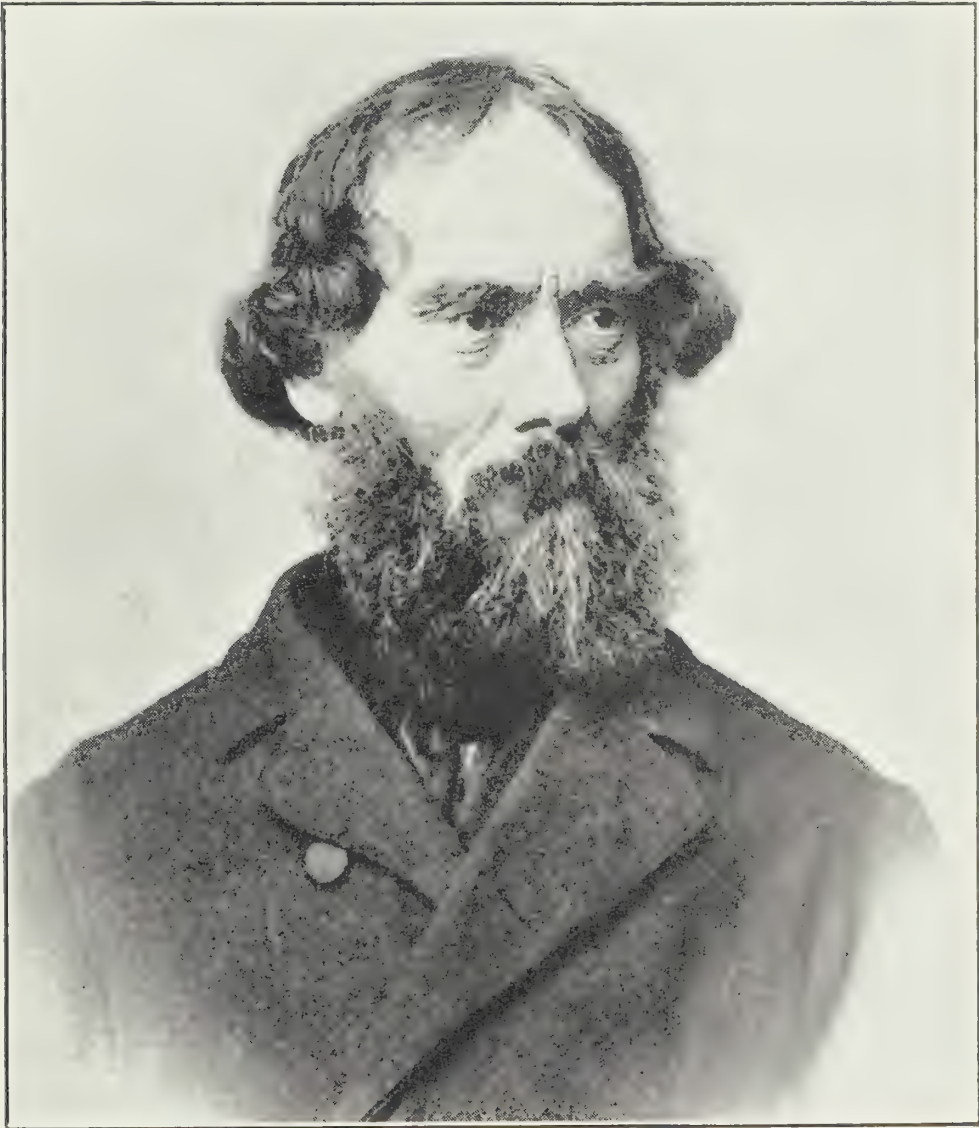
Therein we see that, all the better to work on Smith's fears and make him all the suppler in his hands, he feigned to favour in his paper political aspirations portentous of an ominous evolution in the destinies of the country. "Mr. Riel told me that the next issue [of that paper] would be stronger than the previous one²⁰, but that it would be the last", declared Bannatyne, probably because Riel thought that by that time he would have brought the Scotch Commissioner to terms.

And it did so happen. Smith did not see through the Métis' ruse, and to prevent the materialization of what the latter never had in his head, he had himself to soften down his opposition to him. And when later on, he returned to Canada, he no doubt rejoiced at the thought that he had saved the West to the British Crown! . . .

We will soon have another instance of Riel's shrewdness in his dealings with Donald A. Smith, when he

¹⁹ Page 95.

²⁰ That is, still more pro-American.



GOVERNOR MACTAVISH

went to the length of making him work for the attainment of his own ends.

In the meantime, having learnt that the Scotchman's papers had been left at Pembina ²¹, and wishing to ascertain whether he was empowered to accept or offer terms which might cause the population to contemplate without apprehension the acceptance of Canada's jurisdiction — also, we must admit, in order to see whether these documents did not contain anything that should be withdrawn from the *commune vulgus* ²² before special preparations had rendered their communication innocuous to the cause of union—Riel offered to send for them.

But the Special Commissioner preferred to do so himself, and the Métis leader acquiesced in the proposal, though he remained desirous of having a first peep at them.

We cannot in this connection enter into all the minute details on which complacently tarry authors who seem to imagine that going for those papers was the equivalent of starting on the quest of the Golden Fleece. Here is briefly what happened.

Riel had insisted that one of his men should accompany the messenger, a Mr. Hardisty, superior officer of the Hudson's Bay Company, to Pembina. Fearing some disloyal manoeuvre, Governor Mactavish sent out three anti-Riellites, namely Angus McKay, an English halfbreed, and Pierre Lavallée ²³, a Métis, as well as

²¹ Where Mr. J. A. N. Provencher must have remained.

²² The rabble.

²³ Begg, usually well-informed, save at times on French names, says Laveiller (he perhaps means Léveill  ). V. picture, facing p. 240.

John Grant ²⁴, despite the name of the latter, to meet the two men on their way back.

It may have been midnight when Grant demanded the papers from Hardisty, who was at first much surprised, but yielded them over when assured that they would be handed to Mr. Smith himself. Which seeing, the Hudson's Bay Co. man's companion tried to make a dash, evidently to go and tell Riel of what had happened; but, at the point of a revolver, he was cautioned not to budge and to consider himself the prisoner of the other four men.

That same night, the entire party rested at the house of one Laboucane Dauphinais, where a dance was in progress. While there, the two emissaries from Riel, probably unaware of the presence of the three Mac-tavish men, endeavoured to snatch the precious documents from their bearer, but failed ²⁵.

This, of course, did not put the President in the best of humour. He nevertheless managed to compose himself and did not shrink from facing the largest public meeting which had ever been held in the Settlement, so large indeed that, in spite of the intense cold, it had to take place in the open air.

It was on the 19th. of January, 1870, with a temperature of 20° below zero. Over one thousand persons had assembled to hear what Mr. Smith had to tell them in the name of the Canadian Government, and remained out for the space of five hours, for the lack of a building large enough to contain such a crowd.

The British Blue Book gives the *New Nation's* report

²⁴ Probably a descendant of Cuthbert Grant, who led the halfbreeds at the battle of Seven Oaks.

²⁵ Writing 35 years after the facts, Father Dugas gives a different account of the affair. But we have no manner of a doubt that Begg's version, which we sum up, is the correct one.

of the proceedings at the two public meetings—for one was found insufficient for the business which had to be transacted, especially because of the time which was lost looking for some papers, letters, etc., on the production of which Donald Smith insisted. Of this report, which that gentleman himself found "sufficiently exact"²⁸, here is a faithful résumé.

On motion of President Riel, seconded by Pierre Lavallée²⁹, Mr. Thomas Bunn was called to the chair, after which Riel was himself appointed interpreter³⁰, and on motion of Angus McKay seconded by O'Donoghue, Judge Black was named secretary of the meeting.

The Hon. Joseph Howe's credential letter to Mr. Donald A. Smith was then read in its English text and immediately translated into French by Riel. That document recited that Smith's mission was to ascertain the true causes of the uprising, make the proper promises to the inhabitants and communicate to them various letters which had been addressed to Mr. McDougall, to show the good intentions of the Canadian authorities.

²⁸ Brit. Blue Book, p. 154.

²⁹ Probably the same as the Lavallée, Laveillier or Laveillée already mentioned.

³⁰ But not before Mr. Smith had proposed Mr. de Salaberry for the task. "I... requested Col. de Salaberry to act as interpreter, so that the contents of the several documents and any observations made in English might be faithfully translated to the French party. He kindly promised to do so; but perhaps feeling some diffidence in himself, which I endeavoured to overcome, he proposed that Mr. Riel should be appointed interpreter" (A. B. Willson, *Life*, p. 221, where the incidents are given as a quotation from Smith's Report, though the corresponding part of the official Blue Book (p. 135) is differently worded).

Nobody complained of Riel's interpreting.

Then followed a letter from a "John Young", who Mr. Smith said was the Governor-General of Canada—but Riel objected was not so signed—and addressed to him as Special Commissioner. Therein that gentleman promised that "the people may rely upon it that respect and protection will be extended to the different religious persuasions, that titles to every description of property will be perfectly guaranteed, and that all the franchises which have existed or that the people may prove themselves qualified to exercise shall be continued or liberally conferred" ²⁹.

Mr. Smith then asked for some letters from the Federal Government to Governor Mactavish, and the Bishop of Rupert's Land. After some bickering, these were found and produced by O'Donoghue. Smith further demanded the letter, based on incomplete or inaccurate information, which recorded the Queen's regret at the occurrences in the Red River Settlement, which we have already mentioned ³⁰. After which, on the motion of Robert Tait seconded by a Mr. Mercer, the meeting adjourned till the following day.

On January 20th., the crowd was still larger. Mr. Bannatyne then occupied the chair, and the meeting opened by these words from Father Lestanc, Administrator of the diocese of St. Boniface: "We have been good friends to this day in the whole Settlement, and I want to certify that we will be good friends to-night". This declaration having been translated into English by Riel and in Indian by Rev. Mr. Cochrane, it was received by hearty cheers.

Various letters were then read which had been written by the Governor-General of Canada to Mactavish,

²⁹ British Blue Book, p. 100.

³⁰ End of Chapter VII.

by the Hon. Mr. Howe to McDougall, the last of which contained eight specific promises concerning the future government of the country. Whereupon Mr. Smith adroitly put in some words of his own, declaring, among other things: "I have a number of relations in this land — not mere—Scotch cousins—but blood relations, which could not", he said, "but interest the English part of the assembly to the cause he was championing".

"Hence", he went on, "though I am myself a Scotchman, people will not be surprised that I should feel a deep interest in this great country and its inhabitants. I am here to-day in the interests of Canada, but only in so far as they are in accordance with the interests of this country" ³¹.

A long document in English and in French, which had been addressed to vanished McDougall, was then produced, after which, as a crowning step, Riel proposed, and Bannatyne seconded, that twenty representatives be elected by the English population to meet as many delegates of the French five days later, with a view to considering Mr. Smith's Commission, which everybody accepted as genuine, and deciding what would be the best for the welfare of the country. This was carried.

Then Father Ritchot, of St. Norbert, said that he was glad to have been present with the Bishop of Rupert's Land and the clergy of the various denominations. All, he believed, had come there with the best interests of the people at heart and to see that nothing indecorous would mar the proceedings.

Bishop Machrea said that everybody would heartily respond to the kind of feeling expressed and do what was possible to promote good feeling and concord.

³¹ Brit. Blue Book, p. 102.

Riel closed the meeting by telling of his past apprehensions concerning its issue. "As soon as we understood each other", he said, "we joined in demanding what our English fellow subjects, in common with us, believe to be our just rights. . . Those rights will be set forth by our representatives, and, what is more, gentlemen, we will get them" ³².

The assembly broke out on this cheerful assurance.

Then "the utmost good feeling appeared to exist among all classes towards each other. Caps were thrown in the air, cheers after cheers were given, French and English shook hands over what was then considered the happy prospects before the country, as most parties looked upon the difficulties as next thing to being settled. Certainly, the 20th. of January, 1870, was a happy day in the Red River Settlement" ³³.

As a further proof of this, we might adduce the eagerness with which the English set upon arranging the limits of the new constituencies for their own delegates to the forthcoming Convention of Forty. With that end in view, a committee was immediately formed to devise said circumscriptions and the number of members they should elect. This was presided by the Anglican Bishop himself, and met at his house on the morrow, being composed, apart from the prelate, of Mr. Thomas Bunn ³⁴ and the Rev. J. Black, the head of the Presbyterian body in the country.

According to the arrangement they agreed upon, while some parishes were to send two delegates, and one, St. Andrews, as many as three, the village of Winnipeg was to be represented by only one. But the

³² *Ibid.*, p. 103.

³³ Begg, *Creation of Manitoba*, p. 240.

³⁴ V. illustration, p. 240.

election of that one member occasioned as much stir and noise as that of all the other English delegates put together. National passions affirmed themselves in the humble burgh to such an extent that even Bishop Machrea had to get into the fray, in spite of which the American element managed to get the upper hand, and elect its own candidate.

On the other hand, the happy termination of the two historic days at Fort Garry did not by any means clear the way of all difficulties, and, strange to say, the one personality which had been the most prominent during those long cold hours was henceforth to prove the cause of most of Riel's worry.

With the best intentions in the world, Donald A. Smith was bound to do a vast amount of harm to the aspirations of the French half of the Assiniboians. Union under the circumstances, was the great requisite of the community, and because Riel knew it and was personally of an excitable disposition, those who fell under the influence of the Special Commissioner, after he had been freed from the surveillance of the first days, to the extent of proposing measures which, with his greater grasp of the situation, he felt would result in disaster, were to suffer at times from his temper. On the other hand, as we will see note 3 of our next chapter, the Commissioner's interference was also to have most regrettable results at large.

CHAPTER XI

PERSONNEL

OF THE CONVENTION OF FORTY.

The situation was now this. Through the intervention of the Canadian representative, the people had come to get a better insight into the later views of Ottawa, the now satisfactory character of which was largely, nay exclusively, due to the rising of the French, rising which had also incidentally revealed the original dissatisfaction of the English natives of the land. Smith, after Thibault, had been directed to invite delegates to the federal capital, there to negotiate the claims of the population: it now remained to thoroughly study and agree on those claims, and make the pressing of the same as unanimous as possible, to render all the brighter the prospects of their being granted.

Riel and Père Lestanc knew that such a unity of front was of paramount importance¹, and though

¹ "It was contended by Riel that the settlers, when united, would be in a better position to place their rights before those gentlemen [the Commissioners] for their consideration. If they were authorized to guarantee what the people demanded, then an arrangement could be at once made for the Canadian Government to come in without delay" (Begg, *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 207).

the latter did not care much for politics as such², yet, as a Christian minister momentarily replacing his superior, he was entirely for union, brotherly love and consequent peace.

Unfortunately Smith did not look at things from the same angle, though he was not without excuses for what we cannot help regarding as his mistakes. In the first place, there he was, an honoured official of the Hudson's Bay Company in Montreal, confronted in Red River with an immense establishment belonging to his corporation, but now in the hands of people of whom he could scarcely know what provocation had led them to momentarily occupy it.

He saw there a young, dashing and somewhat autocratic halfbreed controlling men and things that were not his. Evidently no good Company man could be a witness to such a reversal of the normal roles without harbouring for the author of the anomaly sentiments not of the most friendly. In this nobody can blame Mr. Smith.

Moreover as a Britisher and the envoy of Canada, he saw, probably through magnifying glasses, that Riel was at times importuned by American annexationists, and, unaware of the tribune's innermost British preferences (which he indeed wilily concealed from him), it was only reasonable that he should try to detach people from him.

Unfortunately such interference worked in a direction opposite to that he had in mind: while 'undermining the Dictator', instead of working for present

² Indeed we know of at least one case when his attention was called to the fact that he was, in that respect, too easy-going and disinterested, his critic being then a fellow priest of French Canadian ancestry, who had an eye for the political future of the country (V. Dugas, *Hist. véridique*, pp. 50, 51).

peace and future success, he was breeding unrest and dissatisfaction as well as preparing strife, if not regrettable violence³, as events were but shortly to show.

His action in the Settlement was calculated to promote just the opposite of that union sought by Riel and that charity preached by Lestanc. Smith relates himself in his valuable official report how one day Very Rev. Fr. Thibault, Père Lestanc and Colonel de Salaberry called on him and "appeared to be much concerned, and said it was privately reported I had been endeavouring to incite the different parties to hostile collision"⁴.

That such must indeed have been the case, in spite of his denials based on his honest intentions, is made clear by his own evident satisfaction in noting down, on the same page of that report, that "Riel's men were

³ We are not the first to express the opinion that, without Donald A. Smith, there would never have been a Scott execution, because never a rising in Portage la Prairie. No deep thinking is necessary to see that. Suppose for a moment that, instead of "undermining" Riel's prestige, Smith had on the contrary tried to consolidate his authority, which was from the start intended to last but the time necessary to come to an agreement with Canada, that agreement would have been reached sooner, because delegates would have been sent immediately after the Convention which framed the official Bill of Rights, and there would have been no shedding of blood: no Sutherland, Parisien or Scott put to death, and no resulting ill-feeling among the settlers and especially those who were to come after. The inefable falsehoods about Riel, the fables and inventions of wounded pride which now pass for history in certain quarters would also probably be unknown to-day.

Are we not then right to think that Smith's role in Red River was altogether deplorable? Good intentions were assuredly his; but he was too near the heart of the Hudson's Bay Company to act properly in such a complicated crisis.

⁴ Brit. Blue Book, p. 152.

now falling away from him ". This was, for the Métis leader, but a momentary eclipse due to Smith's machinations, since he himself admits their almost immediate return to their previous allegiance—just a straw showing the way the wind (Smith's aspirations) was blowing.

On the 3rd. of January, 1870, six or seven prisoners had been released on parole. Another, the most dangerous of all, Dr. John C. Schultz, was probably then wondering why the people he had in years past taught how to break open public jails were doing so little towards effecting his own rescue, especially when they had just assembled in such large numbers ⁵.

According to his fellow physician, Dr. John O'Donnell, confined like himself in the Provisional Government's premises, Schultz, though a blatant foe of Riel, was not badly treated at all, being "comfortable housed and boarded during his stay in Fort Garry, in fact the guest of Mr. and Mrs. John H. McTavish, and therefore [he] suffered less than three days in prison proper, and then had a room to himself and his meals sent to him from Mr. McTavish's house ⁶. Yet, as he came to realize that nobody thought of releasing him from that "insupportable bondage", he decided to see what he could do himself in that direction.

A penknife and a gimlet had been secretly conveyed to him—in a cake, they say—through the kind offices of his wife. With the former he cut his buffalo robe into strips, which he twisted into a rope, and the latter he fastened to the window-sill, to which the end of his rope was attached.

⁵ In fact, most of the prisoners expected to recover their liberty immediately after the public assemblies of the settlers.

⁶ *Manitoba as I saw it*, p. 36.

This was during the night of January 23rd., and Schultz was exulting at the good trick he was playing on Riel when the gimlet, too small to stand his great weight, yielded to the pressure before he had reached the hard ice of the path on which he fell, thereby seriously hurting one of his legs. With that injured limb he limped about as best he could to the fort wall which remained for him to climb and pass over.

The night was very cold and the weather so boisterous that the guards could not be expected to lurk about because of the improbability of any prisoner thinking of escaping under such conditions. This saved him. Yet his fall on the exterior side of the stone wall might have been dangerous for the wounded fugitive, had it not been for a thick show-drift which broke it considerably.

Schultz managed, lame and suffering real anguish, to reach the parish of Kildonan, whither he could not be tracked, as the blizzard was effacing his footsteps as soon as their imprint was produced on the snow.

There he took refuge under the roof of one whom we may call his political enemy, Mr. Robert MacBeth, councillor of Assiniboia, and father of the clergyman of that name, where he was hospitably entertained for two days¹.

Meanwhile Riel was sending out horsemen in all directions to hunt for the fugitive. But on the second night, he was driven to the Indian Settlement, near Selkirk, where he was to remain quite a while in hiding: after which, accompanied by that Joseph Monkman,

¹ "He and my father had not always seen eye to eye on public matters, for my father was a member of the Hudson's Bay Council of Assiniboia, and Schultz had always taken strong ground on some matters against that body" (*The Romance*, p. 128).

we already know ⁸, he was to make his way by dog-train to the cities of Ontario, and start to preach a crusade against the unspeakable iniquities of that nefarious man, Louis Riel, the would-be President of a so-called Government supposedly Provisional.

Angered at his escape, the Métis chief made another outspoken anti-French prisoner pay for it. This was William Hallett, the confederate of Col. Dennis in his recruiting campaigns against that party. Hallett was put in irons, and made to occupy the room vacated by the irrepressible doctor.

Then came, two days later, the Convention of forty members, which sat from the 25th. of January to the 10th. of February, save for two days recess. It was composed of the best men in the Colony. A list of its French members follows, barring, as usual, the misspelling of some names by English authors.

FRENCH REPRESENTATIVES

St. Paul's	Pierre Thibert
	Alex. Pagé
	Magnus Berston
St. François-Xavier.....	Xavier Pagé
	Pierre Poitras
St. Charles	Baptiste Beauchemin ⁹
St. Boniface	W. B. O'Donoghue
	Ambroise Lépine
	Jos. Genton
	Louis Schmidt
St. Vital	Louis Riel
	André Beauchemin

⁸ For having received an official commission to excite the Indians against Riel and his.

⁹ His election being contested, he took his seat only later on.

St. Norbert	Pierre Parenteau Norbert Caronce B. Tourond
Pointe Coupée	Louis Lacerte Pierre Delorme
Oak Point	Thomas Harrison Charles Nolin
Pointe à Grouette.....	Georges Klyne

Of these we already know O'Donoghue and, more or less, Lépine. Baptiste Tourond, whom Tuttle calls Towron, MacBeth Touton¹⁰, Hill Lowron and Begg Touron, was an influential Métis with a will of his own, who was after the troubles to stand for neutrality between the Manitoba Government and the incoming Fenians. Yet, following the lead of Riel, he finally voted for rising in arms against the invaders of the country.

The Parenteaues are numerous among the French halfbreeds. Pierre, though illiterate, was the one who played the most important historical role. He had already acted as delegate at the Convention of November, and was to become prominent among the anti-Fenian Métis of 1871. On the 7th. of October of that year, he was appointed captain of the company levied at St. Norbert, and when Governor Archibald reviewed the French forces headed by Riel, he was one of the three halfbreeds who had the honour to be presented to him¹¹.

¹⁰ Almost the childish French word for "uncle"!

¹¹ He was also one of the three Métis who, on hearing later of the proposed Fenian raid, wrote to the new and legitimate Governor of Manitoba to offer him the services of the Métis to uphold the cause of the authority of Canada over the country it had at last properly acquired.

Having afterwards trekked northwards, in company with so many of his race who were to reconstitute on the Saskatchewan their little colonies of the Red, he became one of Riel's councillors at Batoche. He was famous as a buffalo hunter, and was probably related to a most honourable family of the same name we know which lives about twelve miles from that place.

Mr. (afterwards the Hon.) Pierre Delorme followed a different path and, sticking to the land of his birth, he was to attain, together with affluence, honours of which he had never dreamt in his youth. A Métis like the preceding, he was elected the very first member for Provencher in the Ottawa Commons, wherein he scarcely felt at home. After this he represented St. Norbert in the first Legislature of Manitoba, in which he did not feel quite so lost. In December, 1873, he was appointed a member of the Council of the North-West, elected by acclamation to represent St. Norbert in October, 1878, at the same time as he was receiving in the Manitoba Government the portfolio of Agriculture, for which he was especially qualified.

The following year he left the Norquay cabinet, in the wake of the leader of the French party, the Hon. Joseph Royal ¹².

Thereafter we see Delorme living as a prosperous farmer. The author of *The Prairie Province* is enthusiastic about him and his patriarchal family. "Good Pierre Delorme", he says, was then "a tall French halfbreed, with curly hair turning silvery, mustachoeed but clean-shaven... A tall man and large-hearted — surrounded by children, from the full-grown blushing damsels with plaited hair, who prepare our breakfast,

¹² When that leader, instead of causing the fall of the cabinet to which he belonged, succeeded in making it only more English.

to the little toddler that peeps from behind a door, but becomes more docile as we leave. . .

“Talk with Pierre as he comes to the door and points to his herd of many cows, log barns and great stacks of hay. He looks across the river to cottages among the bushes, and these are his”¹³.

It is hard to snatch one's self from the contemplation of those kind, because primitive and unsophisticated, honest and generous, Métis families such as this which were the rule in L. Riel's time. To them all the old missionaries give the most unhesitatingly flattering testimony. Nobody will to-day be able to understand what the Métis were before they got spoiled by commerce with unprincipled whites.

But we must go on with our review of the chief French personalities in the Convention of Forty.

André Beauchemin had already been a representative in the November Convention. He was destined to be sent by the St. Vital circumscription to the first Legislature of Manitoba, whereto he was elected December 30, 1870¹⁴.

Despite his German name, due to his descent from one of Lord Selkirk's Meuron soldiers, Georges Klyne passed for a Métis, or French halfbreed, as do the many half castes of that name living to-day; as did also Louis Schmidt, though he was born at Lake Athabaska, where his father was a Hudson's Bay Company officer. He (Schmidt) had first seen the light of day on December 4, 1844, and was one of the three bright children sent East by Bishop Taché to receive a classical education.

¹³ J. C. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-23; Toronto, 1876.

¹⁴ Schofield gives him the alternate name of Millet in his *Story of Manitoba*, p. 263.

Unobtrusive and reserved, cold and certainly not French in temperament, Louis Schmidt is still at this writing ¹⁵ an honoured citizen of St. Louis, Saskatchewan, in which region his son Pantaléon has long filled the office of Indian Agent ¹⁶. Because of his innate modesty, he never brought himself forward, and his natural abilities went unrecognized during the whole of the Red River Insurrection. From personal knowledge we can none the less assure that he was not only a good speaker, but a writer of no mean ability.

A decade or so after the events we are relating, he left for the Saskatchewan valley, and became connected with the Land Office Department at Prince Albert, after which he settled on a farm he had acquired in the parish of St. Louis de Langevin, where he is still living as we write, August, 1934.

Of a less retiring disposition, and not equipped with so solid instruction or education, but of greater character and more self-assertive, was Charles Nolin, probably after Riel the most important of the French members in the Convention of Forty. He was then, as we have seen, one of the two delegates from Oak Point, and he played no mean part in the deliberations of that assembly.

Born in 1823 at Pavanagh, in what is now North Dakota, of a French Canadian trader and Annie Cameron, the [probably halfbreed] daughter of a Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, he seems to have inherited the boldness of the English race and the versatility of the French. He was only two years of age when his parents took him to St. Boniface, where

¹⁵ Spring of 1934.

¹⁶ Facing p. 256 of Schofield's work is a very good portrait of Louis Schmidt.

Mgr. Provencher, the first incumbent of that see, saw to it that he received a good education ¹⁷.

At first a merchant and fur-trader, he became a school teacher. We are presently to see part of the role, quite personal and independent, which he was to play in the impending Convention. As soon as the newly formed province of Manitoba was menaced by American Fenians, he rose against them and became captain of the Oak Point contingent of loyal Métis. Later, 1873, he assisted J. A. N. Provencher in the conclusion of a treaty with the Saulteux Indians and, in March, 1875, he entered as Minister of Agriculture the cabinet of John Norquay, a halfbreed like himself, while at the provincial elections of 1878, he became member for Ste. Anne, which he had already represented in 1874.

Having afterwards joined the northward trek, not only did he not take part in the 1885 Rebellion, except for his forced presence at the Duck Lake fight, but he profited by the very circumstance of that affair and concomitant distractions to escape and repair to Prince Albert, where he remained to the end.

Charles Nolin died in November, 1907, esteemed by all, the Métis for his superior instruction and greater will-power, the whites for the long services he ren-

¹⁷ Nolin is an historic name in the West. A Louis Nolin settled in the Red River valley as early as 1776, and was perhaps the same as the one who, the following year, signed with others a petition for priests addressed to the Bishop of Quebec. As to our present Charles, he was possibly related to an ex-trader of Pembina, who was 82 in 1824, and whose daughter, Angélique, ultimately became the first school teacher for girls five years later (Morice, *Histoire de l'Eglise Catholique dans l'Ouest Canadien*, vol. I, p. 198). It might be that the former Nolin was the grandfather of our Charles.

dered to their race. The latter then consecrated quite flattering obituary press notices to his memory¹⁸.

Such were some of the French representatives that were to take part in the labours of the new Convention. Those for the English constituencies were:

ENGLISH REPRESENTATIVES.

St. Peter's	Rev. Henry Cochrane Thomas Spence
St. Clement's	Thomas Bunn Alex. McKenzie
St. Andrew's	Judge Black Donald Gunn, Senior Alfred Boyd
St. Paul	Dr. Bird
Kildonan	John Fraser John Sutherland
St. John's	James Ross
St. James	Geo. Flett Robert Tait
Headingly	John Taylor William Lonsdale
St. Mary's	Kenneth McKenzie
St. Margaret's	William Cummings
Ste Anne's	Geo. Gunn D. Spencer
Winnipeg	Alfred H. Scott.

¹⁸ For further information on these and other personalities of the old North-West, V. Morice's *Dictionnaire historique*; Québec, 1912. It may none the less be added that Charles' memory is not to-day revered by a certain clique of contemporary Métis related or friendly to L. Riel, because of his aloofness from the 1885 rebellion.

Most of these were white settlers, and that is probably why Mr. MacBeth, himself the son of one of them, writes that "from the standpoint of intelligence and education the preponderance on the side of the English delegates was very marked", though he immediately admits that, even among the French (who were all halfbreeds), "there were some members who were not putty in [Riel's] hands" ¹⁹.

As that same author has it ²⁰, among the English-speaking delegates "were many men who even then were men of note". Yet the first of the two representatives for St. Peter's, the Rev. Mr. Cochrane, was an aborigine, a pure Indian, who had been appointed in 1866 to the charge of the native settlement, or mission, of that name.

The second, Thomas Spence, was an adventurer of a somewhat erratic character, an idealist ever ready to start an undertaking more or less—rather less—practical; a man, in a word, who, at least in the beginning of his public career, could not be made to keep quiet when it was a question of politics. V. for his portrait group facing p. 240.

Born of a Crown official at Edinburgh, Scotland on the 3rd. of June, 1832, he had come to Canada in 1852, after having been soldiering and land surveying. He started life in the West, where he had arrived two years before the Insurrection, as a legal practitioner. He had not been a year in the country when he gave good evidence of his natural spirit of initiative, if not restlessness, by inviting the then Prince of Wales ²¹ to come to Assiniboia, through a document on birch

¹⁹ *The Romance of Western Canada*, p. 139.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²¹ Afterwards Edward VII.

bark, which he palmed off as emanating from the Indians.

In the winter of 1867, he had settled at Portage la Prairie when his inventive genius found a congenial field. "After the Rebellion [by which MacBeth means the legitimate Red River Insurrection], he organized a republic of his own with headquarters at Portage la Prairie", writes that Assiniboian²². This was not "after", but almost two years "before", namely in January, 1868, and it is worthy of remark that his unsuccessful attempt did in no way militate against his election by the friends and proteges of Col. Dennis—all the English anathemas were then as now reserved for Riel, who never dreamt of forming a permanently independent State as Spence did, but merely rose to organize the recognition of his compatriots' civil and religious rights.

Spence's Lilliputian commonwealth was promptly snuffed out of existence by the Imperial authorities who, as regards Riel's action, wrote later that the natives of Assiniboia could not be coerced into acknowledging Canada's sovereignty over their country.

Later, Spence managed to get appointed Clerk of the Manitoba Legislative Council, while L. Riel was hunted down as a wild beast and, as he occupied that post, he published a useful colonization pamphlet²³ which passed through several editions. In 1881 we see him acting as Census Commissioner for the North-West Territories, a role he played again in 1885.

As to Judge Black, he was the head of the Bench in the Settlement and as such highly esteemed by every-

²² *The Romance*, p. 141.

²³ *Manitoba and the North-West of the Dominion*; Quebec, 1876.

body. MacBeth calls him "a man of commanding intellect, of great forensic ability and such a noble bent of character that he had the utmost confidence of the whole community" ²⁴. He had come from England to Rupert's Land and, according to Prof. E. H. Oliver, had first attended the Council of Assiniboia on May 31st, 1849. Almost two years later, on May 1, 1851, he had been appointed President of the Petty Court, in the Upper District of the Colony.

He then left for Australia ²⁵, where he lived a number of years and, on June 4, 1862, reappeared in the Council of Assiniboia, when he was appointed Recorder, or Chief Justice, a position he ever since filled to the satisfaction of everybody.

Next to him, but on a different plane, was Donald Gunn, author of that quaint *History of Manitoba* with the many retrospective references, "we have stated above, we have already seen, as already said", etc. He was a self-made man and scientist, a typical country writer who never sinned by too great a love for the Hudson's Bay Company, considered not as a civil ruler, but as a trading corporation.

Born at Falkerk, Caithness, Scotland, in September, 1797, he had first come into contact with that concern in 1813, then landed at York Factory, being afterwards stationed at Severn and Oxford Houses. He left the service of the Company in 1823 and went to the Red River Settlement, where he afterwards lived and died ²⁶. He had been appointed October 6th., 1850, magistrate for the Lower District, and was to become

²⁴ *The Romance*, p. 140.

²⁵ Where he filled several Government offices.

²⁶ At St. Andrews, on Nov. 30, 1878.

in course of time a member of the Legislative Council of Manitoba.

In a different field again was Mr. (afterwards Senator) John Sutherland, a prominent Kildonan citizen, whose father had been a soldier under the Duke of Wellington. According to MacBeth, who must have known him well, "he was a man of singularly honourable and courageous character" ²⁷. To us as to all the students of Red River history, he is a specially attractive figure, because of the great misfortune, which suddenly befell him as a consequence of the troubles which we shall soon relate, and of the remarkable fortitude with which he stood it.

"Alfred Boyd was a wealthy merchant, who later on was a member of the Manitoba Government. John Fraser was the first postmaster of Kildonan and an able man" ²⁸. The former was according to Dr. O'Donnell, "a wealthy Englishman... [who was to become] the first Provincial Secretary; a man of good education, a gentleman of refinement [and]... a good cartoonist" ²⁹.

If we are to believe the same authority, who writes from personal knowledge, Dr. Curtis J. Bird was a native of the Settlement, who had received his professional training in Guy's Hospital, London, England. He was a man of culture and a clever diagnostician, who was to become Speaker of the Manitoba House ³⁰.

And all those worthies momentarily put aside the exigencies of their respective avocations to meet daily

²⁷ MacBeth, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

²⁹ *Manitoba as I saw it*, pp. 60-61.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

at the bidding of young Riel. Was it not the best possible token that his mission, or at all events the stand he had taken in the community, was coming to be recognized by the noblest minds in the English-speaking half of the population?

CHAPTER XII

THE CONVENTION OF FORTY AND THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.

Now that we are acquainted with the principal members, French and English, of the Convention of Forty, it remains for us to see them at work. We have purposely entered into some details concerning their personality, their standing in society and their natural abilities, in order that the reader may have a better idea of the worth of their operations. The decisions of an assembly composed of the very best elements in a country must, of necessity, command to a greater extent the respect of all, historians and laymen, than those of one made up of indifferent or less able individuals.

No business to speak of was transacted on the first day of the Convention, because of the absence of three of the delegates. On the second, January 26th., all the members being present, Judge Black was unanimously called to the chair, and Messrs. W. Coldwell and Louis Schmidt appointed secretaries, while L. Riel and James Ross¹ became respectively French and English interpreters.

¹ The half caste son of the Presbyterian historian, Alexander Ross by an Indian woman, the daughter of a chief in Oregon, James Ross had been postmaster in the early sixties, and was presently to become the Chief Justice in Riel's Administration.

On the morrow, a committee consisting of Dr. Bird, Messrs. Thomas Bunn, Jas. Ross, L. Riel, L. Schmidt and Charles Nolin was formed to draft a Bill of Rights to be submitted to Mr. Smith for consideration. Two days later this was ready, and each one of its clauses thenceforth elaborately discussed until the 5th. of February, when the whole was finally adopted. We herewith subjoin the text of it.

LIST OF RIGHTS ².

1st. That, in view of the present exceptional position of the North-West, duties upon goods imported into the country shall continue as at present (except in the case of spirituous liquors) for three years, and for such further time as may elapse until there be uninterrupted railroad communication between Red River Settlement and St. Paul, and also steam communication between Red River Settlement and Lake Superior.

2nd. As long as this country remains a territory ³ in the Dominion of Canada, there shall be no direct taxation, except such as may be imposed by the local legislature, for municipal or other local purposes.

3rd. That during the time this country shall remain in the position of a territory in the Dominion of Canada, all military, civil and other public expenses in connection with the general government of the country, or that have hitherto been borne by the public funds of the Settlement, beyond the receipt of the above mentioned duties, shall be met by the Dominion of Canada.

4th. That while the burden of public expense in this

² Which, with final revising, was to be sent to Ottawa.

³ This idea of a "territory" was to be later abandoned in favour of that of a full-fledged province.

territory is borne by Canada, the country be governed by a Lieutenant-Governor from Canada, and a Legislature three members of whom, being heads of departments of the Government, shall be nominated by the Governor-General of Canada.

5th. That, after the expiration of this exceptional period, the country shall be governed as regards its local affairs as the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec are now governed, by a Legislature of the people and a Ministry responsible to it, under a Lieutenant-Governor appointed by the Governor-General of Canada.

6th. That there shall be no interference by the Dominion Parliament in the local affairs of this territory other than is allowed in the provinces, and that this territory shall have and enjoy in all respects the same privileges, advantages and aids in meeting the public expenses of this territory as the provinces have and enjoy ⁴.

7th. That, while the North-West remains a territory, the Legislature have a right to pass all laws, local to the territory, over the veto of the Lieutenant-Governor by a two-thirds vote.

8th. A homestead and pre-emption law.

9th. That, while the North-West remains a territory, the sum of \$25.000 a year be appropriated for schools, roads and bridges.

10th. That all the public buildings be at the expense of the Dominion Treasury.

11th. That there shall be guaranteed uninterrupted steam communication to Lake Superior within five

⁴ Whereby this clause is technically antagonistic to the supposition of clause 2.

years; and also the establishment by rail of a connection with the American railway as soon as it reaches the international line.

12th. That the military force required in this country be composed of natives of the country during four years ⁵.

13th. That the English and French languages be common in the Legislature and Courts, and that all public documents and Acts of the Legislature be published in both languages ⁶.

14th. That the Judge of the Supreme Court speak the French and English languages.

15th. That treaties be concluded between the Dominion and the several Indians tribes of the country as soon as possible.

16th. That, until the population of the country entitles us to more, we have three representatives in the Canadian Parliament; one in the Senate and two in the Legislative Assembly.

17th. That all the properties, rights and privileges as hitherto enjoyed by us be respected, and that the recognition and arrangement of local customs, usages and privileges be made under the control of the local Legislature ⁷.

18th. That the local Legislature of this territory have full control of all the lands inside a circumference having Upper Fort Garry as a centre, and that the

⁵ This was lost by a vote of 16 yeas to 23 nays, and consequently struck off the list.

⁶ This and the following clause appear in all the Bills of Rights, being considered essential to the French population.

⁷ Another most important clause in the eyes of the same people.

radius of this circumference be the number of miles that the American line is distant from Fort Garry.

19th. That every man of the country (except uncivilized and unsettled Indians) who has attained the age of 21 years, and every British subject, a stranger to this country who has resided three years in this country and is a householder, shall have a right to vote at the election of a member to serve in the Legislature of the country and in the Dominion Parliament; and every foreign subject, other than a British subject, who has resided the same length of time in the country and is a householder, shall have the same right to vote, on condition of his taking the oath of allegiance, it being understood that this article be subject to amendment exclusively by the local Legislature.

20th. That the North-West Territory shall never be held liable for any portion of the £300.000 paid to the Hudson's Bay Company, or for any portion of the public debt of Canada, as it stands at the time of our entering the Confederation; and if thereafter we be called to assume our share of said public debt, we consent only on condition that we first be allowed the amount for which we shall be held liable.

Riel then put forth a motion to the effect that "all bargains with the Hudson's Bay Company for the transfer of this territory be considered null and void, and that any arrangements with reference to the transfer of this country shall be carried on only with the people of this country".

This was rather overstepping the mark, an undue reflection on an authority far above, and beyond the reach of, the puny Convention of Red River. Moreover this motion reflected little gratitude for all the Company had done for the Settlement, and betrayed the fact that Riel's long absence in a distant land had

made him somewhat of a stranger to the real sentiments of the country with regard to that corporation.

It was therefore defeated by a vote of 22 against 17, three of the French members, namely Nolin, Klyne and Harrison, declaring themselves against it. Whereupon Riel committed the fault of resenting the action of his friends, the first and last of whom were his own relatives, forgetting himself to the extent of calling them traitors ⁸.

Nolin immediately retorted that he had been sent to the Convention to vote, not at Riel's dictation, but according to his conscience. In the evening the Métis leader further lowered his prestige by abusing Mac-tavish on his sick bed, and on the 7th., he confined to his room, with a guard at his door, Dr. Cowan, who was then acting as the head of the fort personnel. Nay, he went so far as to try to arrest Charles Nolin, but his envoys were forcibly prevented from accomplishing their task. Soon after, Riel made friends with him again.

These were regrettable incidents due to the Métis chief's youth and natural excitability. They did not weaken the great good already achieved through his untiring energy and incontestable sagacity, namely the preparation and adoption of the Bill of Rights by both sections of the population ⁹.

⁸ Here are his very words : " The devil take it; we must win. The vote may go as it likes, but the measure which has now been defeated must be carried. It is a shame to have lost it, and it is a greater shame because it was lost by those traitors " (Begg, *Creation of Man.*, p. 260).

⁹ As the reader must have realized, there were several versions of that bill, and even the one adopted by the Convention was not definite in all its points. It was intended for Mr. Smith, and was destined to be superseded by a later one (Chapter XV) prepared for Ottawa.

His great ambition, forcing Ottawa to come to terms, was now nearing materialization. As the Special Commissioner did not feel equal to the task of guaranteeing the approval of all its clauses, he invited the Convention to elect two or three persons who would go to the capital of Canada and negotiate their acceptance by the Federal Administration and Parliament.

As a step in that direction, in order to have a responsible party to give the necessary credentials to the bearers of the people's claims, as well as to endow it with the proper authenticity, it was deemed expedient, on the 8th. of February, to reorganize, complete and legitimize the Provisional Government in the eyes of those who doubted its binding powers.

To this several of the English members objected, because they claimed that they had not been given authorization to vote on such a question, "a singular manner of sending representatives", cannot help remarking Alexander Begg¹⁰.

In order, therefore, to meet their scruples, a deputation composed of Messrs. John Sutherland, John Fraser, Ambroise D. Lépine and Xavier Pagé immediately went to interview Mr. Mactavish. "We went by consent of the Convention", they afterwards declared. "Our question was in this sense: Was Governor Mactavish still governor of the country and would he continue it? The answer was: 'Form a government, for God's sake; I have no power or authority' " ¹¹.

This being reported to the Convention, its members

¹⁰ *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 268.

¹¹ *Preliminary Investigation and Trial of Ambroise D. Lépine for the Murder of Thomas Scott*, p. 80; also Begg, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

felt free from all hindrances, and confirmed, or appointed, a cabinet representing the whole population as they themselves did, though in a more transitory way. By the quasi-totality of the votes—in fact, only Mr. Boyd dissenting—Louis Riel was confirmed as President of the Provisional Government, which then became composed of the following:

President.....Louis Riel
 Chief Justice.....James Ross
 Postmaster-Gen.....A. G. B. Bannatyne. V. ill.
 Secretary of State..Thomas Bunn ¹²
 Treasurer.....W. B. O'Donoghue. V. ill.
 Asst. Secr. of State.Louis Schmidt

At the same time, Mr. Henry McKenney was continued in his position as Sheriff and Dr. Boyd remained Coroner, while Messrs. John Sutherland and Roger Goulet were named Collectors of Customs. Which means that, though the French-speaking population outnumbered that of English speech, there was only one French, Riel, among the higher officials, an example of generosity which might have been followed by the English of later years.

Ambroise D. Lépine is not mentioned in this connection in the documents of the time, perhaps out of consideration for the feelings of the English element, since, as Adjutant-General, or Chief of the Militia, he had to do only with the French. Lépine was of a rather

¹² "A son of the late Dr. Bunn, a distinguished member of the medical profession here, a man of great erudition. His son inherited the quickness of perception and judicial mind of his father, and was a good speaker, ornate and convincing, and never spoke in the House unless thoroughly conversant with the subject before the chair" (O'Donnell, *Manitoba as I saw it*, p. 60). V. illustration facing this page.

Guilmette	Pierre	Thomas	Xavier	André	Baptiste
	Delorme	Bunn	Pagé	Beauchemin	Tourond



Pierre Poitras	John Bruce	Louis Riel	O'Donoghue	François	Thos.
Bob O'Lane			Paul Proulx	Dauphinais	Spence

RIEL'S COUNCIL (1869-70)

stern or autocratic disposition, and was never popular with his men. But that very sternness probably rendered him all the more fit for his office.

Moreover the future formation of a Council, or Advisory Board, to consist of twelve French and as many English members, to assist the Government and serve as a sort of Chamber of Deputies until the establishment of the permanent Administration by Ottawa, was also voted on and approved by the Convention, whose labours then closed.

“It was near midnight”, writes Begg, “and as soon as the decision of the Convention was known, the guns of Fort Garry thundered out the news, which was answered by a few parties in the town in the shape of bonfires and fireworks—the latter, curious to say, were those intended for the celebration of McDougall’s entrance into Red River”¹³.

At the same time, the official organ of the Government, the *New Nation*, was announcing: “As a result of the amicable union of all parties upon one common platform, a general amnesty to political prisoners will shortly be proclaimed, the soldiers remanded to their homes to await orders and everything placed on a peace footing”¹⁴.

On the tenth of February, when the Convention terminated its labours, it elected three delegates to Ottawa. These were the Rev. J. N. Ritchot, parish priest of St. Norbert, who represented the French; Judge John Black, who was the elect of the English, and Alfred H. Scott, a young clerk in a Winnipeg store, who did not stand for much more than himself—unless we choose to say that he represented the Americans

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 272.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

who, of course, had no rights in a mission of that kind. Hence not a few objected to his election, among whom was Riel himself who, quite properly we think, was of opinion that one of the envoys should have been a half-breed.

At any rate, Scott's delegation could help nobody. He seems to have been a quiet sort of a man, though we happen to know that he could write in a very mordant way. He sided constantly with Father Ritchot, the real negotiator, who was quite able to take care of himself without any help. Judge Black was, we think, on his way to Scotland and could not attend all the interviews of the delegates with the two Ottawa ministers, Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Georges E. Cartier. Alfred Scott must, therefore, be considered as more or less of a figurehead in the negotiations therewith, inasmuch as he was accused of annexationist leanings which he could not display in such a place ¹⁵.

The travelling expenses of the Red River delegates were, of course, to be defrayed by the Federal Government.

Two days after the close of the Convention, Riel liberated a first batch of sixteen prisoners, who took the solemn engagement thenceforth to keep the peace, while another prisoner managed to subreptitiously escape with them without making any promise. Contrary to what unreliable historians pretend, he would have set the others free as well; but, "from some mis-

¹⁵ He was even accused of being an American citizen, which he denied in a somewhat flippant manner in a letter to the *New Nation* (March 17, 1870), where he declared that he had been born in London, England, while he "felt sincerely grateful for the compliment contained in the supposition of [his] being among the members of the thriving American citizens", a remark which betrays no deep love for the British connection.

understanding [they] refused to sign or take the oath not to take up arms against the Provisional Government " again ¹⁶.

Before we proceed to relate the grave events which are next in order in our narrative, it behooves us to rest a while and call attention to an indisputable fact, which nobody should forget. On the tenth of February, 1870, that is at the prorogation of the Convention of Forty, there was in Assiniboia, *de jure* and *de facto*, by right no less than as a matter of fact, no other Government than that presided by Louis Riel, which represented the totality of the population, because regularly formed by delegates, the cream of the country elected with the approval of Ottawa's representative. Furthermore that Government was quite legal and

¹⁶ Begg, *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 277. In this connection, Dr. O'Connell, one of Riel's prisoners, wrote for *The Tribune* of Winnipeg, a story which fully illustrates the loyal, grateful regard of the French halfbreeds for those who have done them a favour. We reproduce part of it, which we translate from a French version of it.

" The wife of one of our guards had been delivered of a child", he wrote. " When the little one was perhaps not more than two weeks old, its mother was seized with convulsions and they fetched me to go and treat her. As I put her under the chloroform during one of her most violent crises, my success in calming her down elicited the most favourable comments.

" Some time afterwards, the same Geouton [he means Genton] sent for me for one of his children who, they said, was sick. Since my first visit, I was not watched over, but was going and coming on the faith of my word of honour. When I reached Geouton's house, I asked to see the patient; but the father told me that nobody needed my services in his place, and that he had sent for me to take me away from a certain danger which threatened the prisoners. There was a rumour to the effect that the English settlers were going to come and attack the Fort, and the good man feared lest some mishap might happen to me " (*Ubi supra*, Dec. 15, 1906).

legitimate, though established only provisionally, that is as a step towards a permanent and normal one.

Therefore any writer who calls it the "so-called" Government or its head the "would-be President", or simply the "President" within quotation marks, betrays his own ignorance or bias.

Until the beginning of December, 1869, the legal administration of affairs in the Settlement was in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company represented by Mr. Mactavish. When, on the first of that month, Mr. William McDougall usurped the latter's authority, Mactavish declared himself shorn of all jurisdiction and thenceforth acted accordingly.

This was but natural on his part, and McDougall had been duly warned of this by no less a party than the chief of the Canadian Government, Sir John A. Macdonald himself. That gentleman had written him on the 27th. of November, 1869:

"You speak of crossing the line and being sworn in the moment that you receive official notice of the transfer of the territory. Now it occurs to me that that step cannot be taken. . . . An assumption of the government by you, of course, puts an end to that of the Hudson's Bay Company's authorities, and Governor Mactavish and his Council would be deprived even of the semblance of legal right to interfere.

"There would then be, if you were not admitted in the country, no legal government existing and anarchy would follow. In such a case, *no matter how anarchy is produced*¹⁷, it is quite open, by the law of nations, for the inhabitants to form a government *ex necessitate* for the protection of life and property, and such a government has certain sovereign rights by the *jus*

¹⁷ Italics our own.

gentium, which might be very convenient for the United States, but exceedingly inconvenient to you”¹⁸.

This was precisely what had happened. McDougall had launched his proclamation; Mactavish had stepped out and Riel followed in, forming, finally, with the co-operation of the whole Settlement, a regular government when the previous normal one “had disappeared and the population had been left without a ruler”¹⁹. By the rights of nations, the *jus gentium*, as experts call them after Blackstone, the father of English law, “it had been quite open for the inhabitants [of Assiniboia] to form a government *ex necessitate*. . ., and such a government had certain sovereign rights”, whatever may think anti-French writers to the contrary.

¹⁸ *Ap.* Sir Joseph Pope, *Memoirs of Sir John A. Macdonald*, vol. II, p. 5.

¹⁹ Whereby we see how far astray are those who, as Judge Woods (*Preliminary Investigation*, p. 112), claim that the Hudson's Bay Co. governor of Assiniboia had no right to abdicate. His corporation had, in the spring of 1869, yielded all its rights to the country, and even if it had not one thing is certain: its representative had declared himself shorn of all power over the Settlement, and advised the people to make a government to themselves. We must take things as they were, not as they should have been according to some. As they were, Blackstone teaches us that the population of the country had a perfect right to form a government to itself.

As to hinting that the Company should have resumed the reins of government and shown itself equal to the extraordinary task imposed by circumstances, McDougall himself admitted afterwards in the Canadian Parliament that “it was absurd to say that the Hudson's Bay Company should have maintained order [let alone done what was necessary under such very special circumstances], as they were in a moribund state of existence” (*Cf.* Brit. Blue Book, p. 146). And this was so true that, as we shall see later on, Riel was designated by Ottawa as the one who should govern until the arrival of the real Governor, Archibald.

This most important and far-reaching²⁰ conclusion should not be lost sight of by the impartial reader, who wants to sanely appreciate what we shall soon have to relate.

Meantime, to recapitulate what we have so far written, here are the genesis and stages of growth of Assiniboia's Provisional Government:

1st. On October 20, 1869, formation by the French halfbreeds of a "National Committee", an emergency organism intended merely to assist, or supplement, the rather helpless government of the Hudson's Bay Company, which is not thereby repudiated; 2nd. on December 8th., after the formal abdication of that government as a result of McDougall's usurpation, inauguration by the French and a few others of a Provisional Government which, though courting the adhesion of the English, remains unrecognized by most of them; 3rd. on February 9, 1870, regular establishment by the freely chosen delegates of English and French of a Government the jurisdiction of which cannot therefore be ignored by anybody.

This need not be insisted on. Now to rest a little from those serious considerations, *pauco minora canamus*, let us busy ourselves with matters of less moment.

It goes without saying that "vain" Riel felt elated at the turn affairs had taken. Apart from the consummation of his most ardent wishes, he thought that his personal worth had at last been recognized and the legitimacy of his action practically upheld. He would not have been a man, let alone a vain man, if he had not been pleased at his final achievement. He must

²⁰ Which suffices of itself to prove the legitimacy of Riel's Government.

now conform in person and appearance to his rank and station in society, and it is perhaps at that period that he started dressing as Dr. O'Donnell describes him.

We have already seen that he was very neat in appearance and dressed well. To do so, it is said that he had had to sell one of his mother's cows, for, though born of an industrious father²¹, he was not rich. Many rulers of the present day would know where to find money for such trivial needs without resorting to the maternal treasury...

Be this as it may, after his undisputed elevation to the Presidency, not only did he never leave the Fort without an escort of mounted guards, but, if we are to believe O'Donnell, he "occasionally wore a purple silk vest, and at other times a black vest with buttons covered with purple silk", the colour distinctive of Catholic bishops. "They were left off, however, after Bishop Taché's return. I understand the natives objected to his wearing purple"²², adds the same writer.

*Se non è vero è ben trovato*²³.

The same may be said of an incident the same Manitoba pioneer relates at length in his little book with the dwarfish chapters²⁴. We shall reproduce it

²¹ The "miller of the Seine", so called because of a mill he had established on that stream, an unimportant affluent of the Red (V. Morice, *Hist. de l'Eglise Catholique dans l'Ouest Canadien*, vol. II, p. 82).

²² *Manitoba as I saw it*, p. 43.

²³ "If that's not true, that's well invented".

²⁴ Chapter XXXI consists of only half a page; chapters XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV of less than three-quarters, XXIX of three-quarters, XXX of one page, etc.

verbatim et litteratim, because it emanates from one of Riel's adversaries²⁵, without vouching for the accuracy of everyone of its details. The reader, by the way, will not wonder more than necessary at the President's aversion for Canadian military men. Was it not from officers, colonels, captains and majors, such as Dennis, Boulton, Cameron, Wallace and Webb, disguised mostly as land surveyors, that all the troubles had proceeded?

Another brave, a Colonel Rankin, fresh from Windsor, Ontario, was going "to interview Riel and give him some advice that would be of great value to him" writes Dr. O'Donnell.

"He first called on an officer of the Hudson's Bay Company, and informed him of his mission. The Hudson's Bay man did not think it wise for him to 'beard the lion in his den', and he did not think he would have cause to congratulate himself on the result of his interview.

"The Colonel walked up to Riel's quarters, with all the assurance of a man accustomed to command, and gave his card to the guard at the door. After some minutes he was ushered to the great man's presence.

"Mr. Riel said:

"'Be seated, Mr. Rankin.

"'Colonel Rankin, Monsieur'.

"'You are not colonel here. You have no rank in my presence. What is your business in as few words as possible? Are you accredited with instructions from

²⁵ Who openly regrets (p. 42 of his factum) that he was not hanged in 1870. An Irishman who follows in the wake of Orangemen is generally no partisan of half-measures!

the Ontario Government or from any organization that would warrant me in giving you an official audience ²⁶ ?

“ ‘No, but I am in close touch with the Federal Government, and any report that I would make to the Government would have great weight, and they would give it careful consideration.

“ ‘You think the Government of Canada would look upon any report you would make as quasi-official?

“ ‘Yes.

“ ‘You may say officially that you had an interview with Riel, the leader of the Métis, and he said you had but twenty-four hours to get out of the country, and further if after that you are taken north of the forty-ninth parallel of latitude, you would be arrested and tried by Court-Martial and dealt with according to the findings of the Court. You say you are a military man; it will not be necessary to explain to you what that means.

“ ‘Baptiste show this gentleman out’.

“ The Colonel made haste to consult the Hudson’s Bay Company officer whom he had first interviewed, who said laughingly:

“ ‘A horse, a horse, my Colonel’s commission for a horse!’

“ The Colonel said:

“ ‘My dear Sir, it is serious. Don’t jest, please. What shall I do? Can you help me out ’ ’ ²⁷ ?

²⁶ Those who know the extreme politeness of the Métis chief will more than doubt the accuracy of Dr. O’Donnell in this particular. At any rate, that is not at all the way he treated Capt. Butler, who was little short of insolent to him—if that officer really tells the truth.

²⁷ *Ubi suprâ*, pp. 104-05.

Once more, we do not guarantee the perfect accuracy of this incident, at least as regards the way it is related. We give it as an instance of the opinion the English then had of the President of the Provisional Government of Assiniboia.

CHAPTER XIII

*THE PORTAGE REBELLION AND
ITS CONSEQUENCES.*

Every difficulty had now been smoothed over. Union and concord prevailed at last, because the people had become one under the government of a man whom everybody knew had enough grip and foresight to make peace and order reign in the Settlement. On this there can be no two opinions: with the formation of a legitimate¹, though provisional, government, which Riel himself regarded as nothing else than a preparatory step to the establishment of a permanent one under Canadian authority², a cessation of agitation, troubles, disorders and wilful opposition had been achieved, when some ill-guided men in Portage la Prairie set upon undoing the good already accomplished by the Convention, and rebelled against the very Government the undoubted representatives of the country had just established!

From this foolish revolt a conflagration such as might have done irremediable harm to the Colony was

¹ Legitimate because the work of the whole population, because formed at the instigation of the former Governor, because there was no other and because called for by the *jus gentium* of Blackstone and Sir John A. Macdonald.

² "I only wish to retain power until I can resign it to a proper Government", he explicitly declared to Captain Butler (*The Great Lone Land*, p. 134).

to ensue, if those in charge of Fort Garry did not keep their heads cool and showed themselves too sensitive to provocation.

And the Portage insurgents could not truthfully plead ignorance of the changed conditions, as Schofield think they could³ after Boulton (who may have purposely been kept in the dark). Nobody conversant with the circumstances as they were then will believe that they could have been so ill-informed as not to know what had been done by the Convention.

At any rate, as Begg has it, they ought to have waited for the report of their delegates before taking any rash measure. And then "one of their delegates, Mr. McKenzie, a sensible and good man, met them and strongly advised them to turn back, as they were liable to cause a great deal of trouble if they continued on their course. He also told them that the prisoners were being released or about to be so.

"Notwithstanding this good counsel on the part of a thoroughly honest and reliable man, they persisted in holding on their way, their strength increasing as they went, until they numbered somewhere about one hundred men"⁴.

Before we proceed to relate what then took place, let us be allowed to give an instance of another kind of prejudice, to add to the three varieties reviewed in our first chapter. This we will, improperly perhaps, call place prejudice, or the dimming of one's mental

³ "It should be said here that the men from Portage la Prairie had not heard of the success [what success?] of Mr. Donald A. Smith's negotiations with the convention and the formation of a provisional government" (*The Story of Manitoba* p. 279).

⁴ *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 277.

vision induced by local preferences or predilections, which, allowable in other cases, should be unknown of the genuine historian.

Rev. A. C. Garrioch, who passed a number of years at Portage la Prairie, takes up the cudgels for those who were guilty of that supreme imprudence, to put it mildly, and calls those who directed it "brave men [he does not say rebels] who, at the head of the Portage volunteers, made Riel keep his word [he had already done so] and release the prisoners" [he did *not* release them because of the Portage rebellion, but because those that remained were at last persuaded to take the pledge not to rise any more against the Government].

The same clerical author boldly declares that those unthinking people "are deserving of the highest praise" ⁵. If that is not misplaced sympathy, in fact prejudice, we fail to see what either can be ⁶.

Fortunately for the good name of history even in English hands, that is the relation of happenings without likes or dislikes, a number of other authors are of a quite different opinion. Even Robert B. Hill, who wrote his History chiefly from the standpoint of the Portager, feels unable to see anything praiseworthy about it, and is constrained to remark that "the results of this rising were certainly unfortunate, renewing for a time the ill-feeling between the English and French parties, and placing a much larger number of prisoners in Riel's power" ⁷.

⁵ *First Furrows*, p. 225.

⁶ In fact, the old man (86 as we write—1934) seems, in the face of the quasi-general condemnation of authors, to have come to see that he was alone of that opinion; for we fail to find that appreciation in *The Correction Line*, the new edition of the lesser work which contains it.

⁷ *Hist. of Man.*, p. 287.

He might have added that the same "mad-like" expedition⁸ was ultimately to cost two human lives, later followed by a third. An English historian, Geo. Stewart, Jr., does not judge differently what he calls a "stupid uprising"⁹, whose result consisted in putting "the whole country in a moment at the feet of Riel". To others than Englishmen, this was far from being the direst consequence of the same.

That most eminent lawyer and merciless dialectician, John S. Ewart, finds therein nothing less than a "foolish escapade"¹⁰ which, according to B. Willson, "was not only rash but purposeless, as, without its intervention, the prisoners would unquestionably have been released"¹¹. Indeed all those who were willing to promise not to take up arms any more against the Government of the land had been set free. Would it have been reasonable for Riel to court new troubles by giving their liberty to people who threatened to rise again as soon as out of jail?

On this point, Donald A. Smith's biographer has all the less merit in thus describing the situation as in so doing he merely repeats word for word his hero's opinion, such as contained in his official Report, in which the Canadian Commissioner does not, however, conceal the fact that his "sympathies were, in a great measure, with the Portage men"¹², because, no doubt, of their good intentions¹³ we would add that

⁸ Begg, *Creation of Manitoba*, p. 290.

⁹ *Canada under the Administration of the Earl of Dufferin*, p. 390.

¹⁰ *The Manitoba School Question*, p. 353.

¹¹ *Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 231.

¹² Brit. Blue Book, p. 154.

¹³ And, of course, because they went after a common foe and spoke the same language as he.

their only excuse was, apart from racial prejudice, their ignorance of the Métis leader's real objects or plans, an ignorance which Smith shared to no small extent.

He nowhere calls the Portagers "rebels", even though they had explicitly risen against the Government he had himself concurred in forming: a case of English illogicalness. Yet had they as good reasons to rise as Riel and his had had: the protection of property against the rapacity of greedy strangers, and the securing of the rights of the whole population by the passing of that solemn covenant which is now called the Manitoba Act? He, not they, remained a "rebel" in Smith's eyes! Oh! the wonderful English logic!

Nevertheless Smith goes on to say in the same report: "The attempt was to be deplored as it resulted in placing the whole Settlement at the feet of Riel [peace and order with subsequent losses of lives seem to him but secondary considerations; Riel become more powerful, that is the most damnable consequence]. The great majority of the settlers, English and Scotch, discountenanced the movement, and bitterly complained of those who had set it on foot" ¹⁴.

What excuse had these to adduce for their certainly not pacific step? Their leader was Boulton, whom we have seen so active in raising companies of insurgents at the very door of Riel, who had magnanimously refrained from interfering with his warlike activities. Now, according to the Special Commissioner, "he and his friends at the Portage assured [him] that he exerted himself to the utmost to keep them from rising,

¹⁴ Brit. Blue Book, p. 154.

and only joined them at the last moment, when he saw they were determined to go forward ” ¹⁵.

These sentiments, which are just the opposite of those Mr. Garrioch finds so admirable and which were not shared in by other respectable members of his own Church—“ no more rash or foolhardy enterprise could well be imagined ” ¹⁶, says Machrea—are fully supported by Boulton’s own admissions, discreet as they are. “ Attempts ”, he wrote sixteen years later, “ had been made on one or two occasions to organize a party to secure their release, which I discouraged ” ¹⁷.

He then proceeds to give an account of the excitement caused by the highly coloured descriptions of prison life given by Thomas Scott after his escape, and says that so well known was he, Boulton, as being against such an escapade as that which was contemplated that “ the meetings for the purpose of organization were held secretly and information kept from [him]. But when [he] discovered that they were determined to go, [he] felt it [his] duty to accompany them ” ¹⁸.

Yet so little enthusiastic was he about it, even then, that, once arrived at Headingly, he “ felt [he] had lost the confidence of many of the men, who thought that [he] was not in earnest and who knew that [he] was not in thorough accord with the expedition ” ¹⁹. So

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

¹⁶ Machrea, *Life of Robert Machrea*, p. 200. This being the official biography of the Anglican Bishop of Rupert’s Land, its appreciations may well be taken for those of that Church.

¹⁷ *Reminiscences*, p. 100.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101. Boulton seems to have been some kind of a Middle Ages knight.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

he offered his resignation, which, however, was not accepted.

After these preliminary considerations, we can undertake the relation of the facts they refer to.

The Portagers being now bent on releasing Riel's remaining prisoners and, with that end in view, to wage war on the occupants of Fort Garry, left at one o'clock, to the number of about sixty ²⁰, some armed only with oak clubs, which were scarcely calculated to play much havoc among a garrison protected by stout stone walls, loop-holes and bastions, good up-to-date rifles and not a few cannon ²¹. There was no commissariat of any kind, scarcely any food outside of that which they expected would be given by sympathizers — and the temperature was of the coldest, as it was the afternoon of February the 9th.

As a climax, when the foolhardy crowd had reached Headingly, a furious blizzard arose which lasted two

²⁰ Some say eighty, others one hundred, D. A. Smith eighty or one hundred; but these numbers must include those who joined on the way. On the other hand, in Hill's *History* "one of the leading spirits" of the expedition restricts the number to fifty, but adds that they were "well armed with guns, ammunition and battering rams, which were packed in sleighs" (*Op. cit.*, p. 281).

The same "leading spirit" goes on to say: "Nothing of any account occurred till we reached White Horse Plain [St. François-Xavier], where we were challenged by a sentry who demanded where we were going. To this John Dillworth, who was afterwards taken prisoner, replied 'To bury Mr. So-and-so'. This apparently satisfied the sentry, and we passed on without further molestation till we reached Headingly, where we were billeted among the settlers for the night and the next day in the church" (*Ibid.*, *ibid.*).

²¹ Whilst they would themselves have had to battle with the mere open prairie for a theatre of their activities.

days and forced the rebels to abandon their plan of surprising the garrison of the fort at night and taking it by storm. When the hurricane abated, two emissaries were dispatched in advance, in order to secure the sympathies and enlist the co-operation of the neutral French under W. Dease and of the English settlers under Dr. Schultz, still lurking in the country. A half-breed called Gaddy was sent to the former and a Mr. John Taylor to the latter.

The appearance of Mr. Taylor was welcome news indeed to the doughty doctor, in hiding in the Settlement, who immediately caused to rise and enrolled as many as he could of the colonists. He was bound to have his revenge on the "arch-rebel" ²². Of course, he was not then himself "rebellious".

Meantime the Portagers, with their ranks swelling as they went, left Headingly at 8 o'clock in the evening of the 14th. of February and, passing by Winnipeg with ladders to scale the fort walls, momentarily halted at the house of the only French Canadian there, a Mr. Henri Coutu, relative of Riel whom the latter was in the habit of visiting. With a view to capturing the Métis leader, they surrounded the building, which Major Boulton and Thomas Scott entered at the very time when "the man they were looking for [was] in Fort Garry, urging his influence to restrain the French from attacking their party" ²³.

Be it said to Boulton's honour, he admits in his book that the arrival of his forces was not viewed with unmingled satisfaction in the Colony. "Some of the

²² Namely Riel.

²³ *Creation of Manitoba*, p. 279.

settlers", he writes, "seeing us arrive at Kildonan²⁴, were alarmed at the turn affairs had taken. The action of the Convention, they expected, was about to bring a peaceful solution of the difficulties which they had hoped would be realized; but the appearance of another armed force on the scene cast all their hopes to the wind"²⁵.

Even Mr. MacBeth has to record this cold reception, which must have appeared quite unaccountable to Mr. Garrioch. "The consensus of opinion among them", writes the former, "seems to have been that any movement of the kind contemplated would not only be futile, for the reasons above given, and likely to result in a useless shedding of blood; but it was also inopportune, inasmuch as the species of union (*sic*) effected between the opposing parties by the convention just held would be the most certain means of preserving peace until the Dominion Government, with whom the delegates from that convention were treating, would take the whole matter in hand"²⁶.

The truth is that neither Boulton, nor Dennis, Mair or McDougall ever understood the real mentality of the Red River settlers in this connection. These could be momentarily roused to rashness against their fellow citizens when made to believe that these worked against the British connection — which they *never* did; but the fire kindled by the untruthful agitators could not

²⁴ Some three or four miles north of Fort Garry, Kildonan is so named after a parish in the Old World, Kildonan, Sutherlandshire, whence a good many of the early settlers originated. V. pp. 321 and 325 of Bryce's *The Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists*; Winnipeg, [1909].

²⁵ *Reminiscences*, p. 105.

²⁶ *The Romance*, pp. 151-52.

last: the English-speaking colonists and halfbreeds knew the Métis too well.

This is exactly what happened. On the 15th. of February, that ever restless busybody, Dr. Schultz ²⁷, arrived at three in the afternoon at the head of three or four hundred armed settlers, preceded by a small cannon drawn by four oxen ²⁸. The Presbyterian minister, Rev. Mr. Black, placed his house and all he had, even to his church and school, at the disposal of the improvised troops, in about the same way as Father Ritchot, of St. Norbert, had allowed the first meetings of the Métis National Committee to take place in his presbytery, with this important difference, however, that the priest alienated to profane uses neither church nor school.

But the enthusiasm which Boulton chronicles in his book of reminiscences could not make up for the lack of food which, too soon for the raw recruits, began to be felt. Before anything could be achieved, that rising against legitimate authority was to occasion a most regrettable death, which was shortly after to be followed by two others. The first one we will relate in the words of W. J. Healy, or his informant ²⁹, because they furnish us with the clearest account of the unfortunate affair we know of, and also because of the

²⁷ He at least was entitled to that qualification. He had rebelled, first, against the government of the Hudson's Bay Company, which he hated with all his heart; he now was in open revolt against the government which had succeeded the former, and even under that of Canada, for which he had been working so hard, he was not long to live in peace.

²⁸ The reader with critical dispositions will not help thinking that those oxen must not have been in very good condition, or their work must have been of the very lightest.

²⁹ Shorn of a few phrases irrelevant to our subject.

special authority which must enjoy the declarations of an eye-witness which form the basis of said account. This, moreover, embodies the most beautiful Christian sentiments of the victim.

The evening of the junction of the Portage and Settlement forces, "a French Canadian³⁰ who was simple-minded came down the road past the Kildonan church³¹. He had been employed in Fort Garry sawing and chopping wood, and was on his way to his people, who lived across the river from St. Andrews. Some of Major Boulton's men seized him as a spy, and made him a prisoner in the school house".

Let us open here a little parenthesis to remark that said Parisien, though in reality a Métis, belonged to Schultz' own party. "Parisien, one of his partisans whom we had taken prisoner, escaped from us and rejoined his party", write Riel and Lépine³², a telling example of the confusion which then reigned among the English. Healy, or his informant, continues:

"In the morning, he managed to make his escape. He ran to the river bank, took a gun from one of the sleighs that were standing near the church and ran down the river bank. That was about ten o'clock in the forenoon. Only a few minutes before Parisien's escape, the Sutherlands, who lived across the river, were welcoming their father home from Fort Garry.

³⁰ A little mistake: Parisien was a Métis.

³¹ Whose incumbent was the Rev. John Black, Presbyterian minister whom Presbyterian Bryce modestly calls the Apostle of Red River, though that worthy saw that country but thirty-three years after the arrival there of the first Catholic priest under the British regime, thirty-one after that of the first Anglican minister, etc.

³² In their letter to Gov. Morris.

He had persuaded Riel to set all the remaining prisoners free that morning³³. He said to my second eldest brother John Hugh:

“Jump on a horse and run as fast as you can across the river to Major Boulton and see Schultz, and tell them that all the prisoners are to be set free!

“John Hugh ran out at once and started across for Kildonan on a horse...

“Poor John Hugh was crossing the river when he and the half-witted and badly frightened young Parisien met. Men were running from the river bank in pursuit of Parisien, who raised his gun and fired twice at my brother. John Hugh fell wounded from his horse. Some of the men who were pursuing Parisien carried him to Dr. Black's house. Others seized Parisien and dragged him back to the school house. My uncle, William Fraser, after helping to carry my brother into Dr. Black's house, came over to our house, and my father and mother went away with him at once, and were away all day...

“John Hugh died the next morning. Before he died, he begged earnestly that young Parisien should not be punished for what he had done.

“‘The poor simple fellow was too frightened to know what he was doing!’ my brother said.

“The men who had seized Parisien dealt with him very roughly, and talked of hanging him there and then”³⁴.

Here again we take the liberty to interpolate a remark or two on the way the poor simpleton was treated

³³ The sequel will show that Healy's informant was slightly mistaken in this.

³⁴ *Women of Red River*, pp. 221-23.

by people to whom he had done no wrong; who did not even know him, but thought he must, as a matter of fact, be a bad man, since French was his mother tongue, who even arrested and abused him without realizing that he belonged to their own party! According to Mr. Garrioch, as he tried to escape from their hands, they brought "his flight to a temporary finish by a *slight tap* on the head with the back of a tomahawk. His feet were then tied together with a sash, and another was passed round his neck, and they were on their way to the schoolhouse dragging their unfortunate victim head first like a toboggan when they were met by Maj. Boulton, who insisted — almost a little too late — on his being treated more in accordance with the methods of civilized warfare" ³⁵.

According to Healy's witness informant, that "slight tap on the head" must not have been such a very friendly tap, for the lady adds: "I remember Dr. Black saying how pitiable an object young Parisien was as he saw him lying half unconscious with the blood streaming from a wound in the side of his head, which one of the men had given him with a hatchet. He died not very long after" ³⁶.

Will it be believed after that, that, contrary to what all historians have written in this connection, the Rev. Mr. MacBeth,, who must certainly have known better, has the heart to call the poor half-witted boy a "spy"—a point on which could be mistaken the Portage people who did not know him, but not a native of the Settlement like MacBeth—and to write that he died "from natural causes a few months later"? This is from his

³⁵ *First Furrows*, p. 229.

³⁶ *Women of Red River*, p. 223.

*Romance of Western Canada*³⁷. Is not that "roman-cing" with a vengeance?

Meanwhile over six hundred English-speaking men under Boulton and Schultz were, in the evening of February 15th., gathered in and around the Kildonan church and school. They had in the morning dispatched to the President of the Provisional Government Tom Norquay, of St. Andrews, with an ultimatum giving him until a certain hour of the morning to set free those prisoners who remained after the liberation of the sixteen others. Failing this he was to be attacked in his stronghold, he and his five hundred soldiers, fifty of whom would have sufficed to victoriously withstand their combined assault. They added that the English of the Settlement "would not recognize the Provisional Government"³⁸ they themselves had formed less than a week before!

"As expected, the prisoners were immediately released". This is from Rev. A. C. Garrioch³⁹. We are afraid the venerable clergyman is not quite right. According to Alex. Begg, who was then on the spot and therefore "in a splendid condition to get his facts correctly"⁴⁰, Riel showed much anger at the tone of the British epistle, which he tore to pieces in presence of its bearer, after which he practically charged him to tell them that they were welcome to try their best.

Not one of the prisoners had been "immediately"

³⁷ P. 152.

³⁸ Begg, *The Creation of Manitoba*, pp. 285-86. Cf. also Boulton's *Reminiscences*, pp. 115, quoting from O'Donoghue's declaration.

³⁹ *First Furrows*, p. 228; also Gunn's *Hist. of Manitoba*: "The despatch of the messenger was followed by the immediate release by Riel of the remainder of the prisoners", p. 386.

⁴⁰ Garrioch, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

released when, hearing of the President's temper and fearing a bloody collision which might result in disaster to the assailants, a Miss Victoria McVicar nobly intervened on behalf of peace⁴¹. Accompanied by Mr. A. G. B. Bannatyne, she boldly went to see Riel, who "told [her] that he had given the prisoners an opportunity to get released, but that, for some reason, they would not sign the agreement he had prepared"⁴².

Whereupon Bannatyne was given permission to visit them one after the other, and persuaded everyone of the twenty-four to sign. This being done—under circumstances which plainly showed that their refusal had so far been a concerted affair, to put the President in a false position in the eyes of the public—they were immediately set free. One of them, Hyman, who, as we already saw, had had his feet injured by frost in a previous attempt at escape, was even driven home by Riel's order.

From all of which it will appear how much truth there is in the contention of some that "the Portage volunteers made Riel keep his word and release the prisoners"⁴³, and of others that "he was not in a hurry to keep his promise with regard to releasing" them⁴⁴. Perhaps he should have allowed them to go and swell the ranks of the rebels at Kildonan?

The President then remembered the insolent letter of the latter. Lest there should be an excuse for their allowing themselves to be massacred before Fort Garry's walls, he wrote them as follows:

⁴¹ Before or after Mr. Sutherland.

⁴² Begg, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

⁴³ Garrioch, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

⁴⁴ Gunn, *Hist. of Manitoba*, p. 385.

“ Fort Garry, Feb. 16th., 1870.

“ Fellow Countrymen,

“ Mr. Norquay came this morning with a message, and even he has been delayed. He will reach you time enough to tell you that for my part I understand that war, horrible civil war, is the destruction of this country; and Schultz will laugh at us if, after all, he escapes. We are ready to meet any party; but peace, our British rights, we want before all.

“ Gentlemen, the prisoners are out—they have sworn to keep peace. We have taken the responsibility of our past acts. Mr. William Mactavish has asked you, for the sake of God, to form and complete the Provisional Government. Your representatives have joined us on that ground. Who will now come and destroy the Red River Settlement?

“ LOUIS RIEL ”.

Rev. Mr. Garrioch bids us “ note the funny question and answer contained in the concluding sentence ” ⁴⁵ of this letter. We confess to being too obtuse to see therein anything funny at all. To us it sounds as a very pertinent challenge to the insurgents, in a sensible and manly communication, and we are surprised that an author whose very works stamp him as a man with a fine sense of humour should not see it ⁴⁶.

For a while after this, the English thought of going on with their proposed attack on the fort, which plainly proves that the liberation of the prisoners was

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 230.

⁴⁶ That answer of the President of the Provisional Government shows also whether he was so “ awed by this gathering ”, as Bryce would have it (*Rem. Hist. of the Hudson's Bay Company*, p. 470).

merely an excuse for their rebellion ⁴⁷. Their religious authorities, however, friends of the Settlement and, above all, hunger, actual or prospective, persuaded them to disperse and return to their homes. Those of Portage la Prairie and way points were to go either singly or in very small groups, so as not to attract attention — at least such was the advice given by Maj. Boulton.

Those who followed it got home safely; but a party of forty-eight who thought that, having come openly they should return openly as brave men—amongst whom was their leader, who stuck to them against his better judgment—were intercepted as they passed near the Fort by a squad of Riel's forces under O'Donoghue and Lépine, disarmed and made prisoners to take the place of those who had just been liberated (17 February, 1870) !

Of them fifteen were from the Portage itself, twelve from High Bluff, of whom three bore the French name of Paquin, as many from Headingly, five from Poplar

⁴⁷ This shows at the same time how very little reliable is, as usual, that careless writer. "Alarmed at the movement" [of the Portage men], he writes in another book, "Riel released all the prisoners in the fort. Their object being gained, the men of the Kildonan church camp, who had grown to be six hundred strong, dissolved" (*The Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists*, p. 297). We are afraid anything "romantic" is out of place in an historical book. Better have the plain, unvarnished facts.

In this particular place, the truth is, according to Begg, who was on the spot and daily noted events as they happened, that "the English party continued to go on with their preparations to attack Fort Garry. They levied provisions from the neighbouring houses, and endeavoured to get some sort of order amongst the people collected around the church" (*Op. cit.*, p. 289).

Point, two from St. James and one from Rivière Sale, or St. Norbert.

“ This ended this mad-like expedition from Portage, the immediate results of which were the loss of two lives [pending that of a third, which, however, could have easily been averted by the victim himself] and the capture by the French of forty-eight prisoners ” ⁴⁸. But it did not put a stop to the campaign of slander against Riel; on the contrary, it gave it a fresh impetus because of the new occasion it afforded for smarting under defeat.

It goes without saying that Riel being implicitly concerned in this capture, it could not in the opinion of the English have been effected by fair means. The inventions of later “ historians ” with regard to the first, that of Schultz and party, were bound to be repeated in this connection, with as much respect for truth. Dealing with a so-called promise of safety made by Riel before the arrest of the prisoners, Begg mentions only “ a rumour ”, no written engagement. “ It is said ”, he writes, and “ if this is the case ” ⁴⁹, etc.

According to Mr. MacBeth, “ there was [as usual!] much haziness, and *it seemed* to be understood that [the Portage rebels] had liberty to return to their homes without let or hindrance ” ⁵⁰. We are afraid that this haziness was nothing else than an after-product, intended to cover a feeling of shame at having been caught without a show of resistance.

Boulton, who was at the head of the rebels, is not himself any more positive about any engagement on the part of the President. Those who were for return-

⁴⁸ Begg, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

⁵⁰ *The Romance of the North-West*, p. 153.

ing *en bloc*, he observes, *stated* that Riel “had sent a message to say that he did not intend taking any more prisoners”, and adds: “*If* such a message did reach us”, etc.⁵¹ If Boulton did not know, who can have pretended to know?

Another party there was, however, who was in an excellent position to ascertain the truth about it, and that was Special Commissioner Donald A. Smith himself. In his ponderated Report does he charge, as do later authors, Riel with having violated a promise in this respect? Here is exactly what he has to say in this connection.

Finding unaccountable the fact that the Portage men did not make a *detour* to avoid being captured by Riel's forces, he says that their boldness resulted from “a *supposed* promise by Riel that they would be permitted to pass unmolested”. But he adds: “Their messenger, a young man named McLean, on being questioned by Archdeacon McLean and myself, in presence of the Rev. Mr. Gardner and one or two other gentlemen, admitted that Riel, on being asked ‘if the party would be permitted to pass’ was silent, and only on being informed that they intended next day to use the route just outside the town, remarked:

“‘Ah! that is good’, and for his purpose it no doubt was so ”⁵².

And yet where is to-day the Anglo-Canadian writer who, amongst the innumerable false charges he levels at Riel, charges of which he can have no idea who has not read the pretended histories of those troublous times which it would take a big book to refute in detail, does not record that of playing fast and loose

⁵¹ *Reminiscences*, p. 112.

⁵² British Blue Book, p. 154.

with his pledges, of being a man without word, etc.? It has even come to this that there seems to be to-day no accusation of too damaging character with which the memory of the man who snatched the Manitoba Act from an unwilling Federal Government cannot be besmirched.

To quote but two representative instances of modern historical justice and accuracy (!): "He was guilty of an act of deepest treachery in arresting nearly fifty of the Assiniboine levy as they were returning to their homes". This, of course, is from the pen of romancing Dr. Bryce⁵³. Another author who is generally fairer, Chas. Tuttle, old Gunn's continuator, goes to the length of writing that "Boulton was *decoyed* by Riel, who caused him to believe that he would be allowed to pass the Fort unmolested, but 'gobbled up'⁵⁴ the whole detachment as soon as he had it completely at his mercy"⁵⁵.

Such is the way history is written when racial feelings and resentment are made to speak louder than the dictates of sober truth.

The insurgents then arrested were:

Major Boulton	Alexander McPherson
John McLean	W. G. Bird
Robert McBain	Alexander McLean
James McBain	George Sandison
Wilder Bartlett	J. Dillworth
Dan Sissons	William Dillworth
A. Murray	Thomas Baxter
W. Farmer	John Taylor

⁵³ *Rem. Hist. of the H. B. Co.*, p. 470.

⁵⁴ An allusion to the expression of the *New Nation* in its account of the capture.

⁵⁵ *History of Manitoba*, p. 388.

Lawrence Smith	John McKay
R. Adams	G. Parker
J. Paquin	George Newcomb
Joseph Paquin	H. Taylor
William Paquin	J. B. Morrison
M. McLeod	W. Salter
Charles McDonald	Magnus Brown
Archibald McDonald	N. Morrison
Thomas Scott	W. Sutherland
James Jock	Robert Dennison
James Sanderson	Joseph Smith
George Wylds	Charles Millan
D. Taylor	Alexander Parker
A. Taylor	Sergt. Powers
John Switzer	John Ivy
H. Williams	and another,
	name unknown.

CHAPTER XIV

FURTHER CONSEQUENCES OF THE PORTAGE REBELLION.

After this razzia, Riel's men could make up for the time spent in vigil and worry. The two or three nights of suspense they had just passed had been quite a trial to their nerves, and it can scarcely be wondered if they were now determined to stand no more nonsense from outsiders, and if their leader was himself bent upon making these pay for their ever recurring insubordination. This state of mind will account for his severity after this last revolt against his Government¹.

This will also perhaps serve as an excuse for the indulgences, never, as far as we know, attaining the proportions of general excesses, which his men then allowed themselves. As too great a success is seldom an unmixed boon, they found it an excuse for some relaxation from their original temperance vows which,

¹ Before entering upon this important chapter, might we not be allowed to compare the execution after due trial, in an isolated point of the then wild Canadian West, of a single individual, "irrepressible" and uncontrollable, who could have averted his fate by promising to amend, with the massacre without a moment's notice, in one of the largest cities of the world, by a man (Hitler) who merely suspected them of evil intentions with regard to his Government, of no less than seventy-seven very high personages in civil, military and religious circles, who were brutally shot without the least preparation for death?

in the eyes of their watchful enemies, was not calculated to help their cause. They had the precious liquid ready at hand; it would have been well-nigh heroical for them to leave it untouched under the circumstances.

In the meantime squads of soldiers were scouring the Settlement for Dr. Schultz, whose late action had betrayed his stay in the country. He could not be found, and the incorrigible agitator, realizing that his days were counted if he stayed much longer around the settlers' farms, deemed it expedient to disappear. He left for the East on the 21st. of February.

And here we may surmise that he must not have been too keenly regretted even among the English, who were far from being all friendly to him. People were commencing to resent the annoyance, due to his sojourn amongst them, of the privacy of their homes being pried into by groups of police in search of him.

Another, but less important, anti-French agent, in fact a "mere halfbreed", as should say to-day's detractors of Riel, a halfbreed whose manners and pretensions must have invited raillery, next called the President's attention to the remuneration that must be his. After having made fun of the gobbling up of the Portage adventurers, the *New Nation* related the capture, at William Dease's house, of that William Gaddy² or Gaddee we have already seen coming in advance of the Portagers, to induce the neutral French to join the rebels in their rising against Riel's Government.

The paper contains quite a write-up about "King William", whose kingdom of Pointe Coupée had

² Called Goddy (perhaps a misprint) by Father Dugas (*Hist. véridique*, p. 167) and Gaddy by Schofield (*The Story of Manitoba*, p. 274) after D. A. Smith (*Report*, p. 156 of the Brit. Blue Book).

evaporated. "Poor William", went on the article, "no more shall thy vassals assemble at the call of thy tin horn, nor thy edicts be paramount [tantamount] to the Papal Bull. How have the mighty fallen! Thy Prime Minister is masticating the pemmican of the Provisional Government, and thy subjects are private soldiers thereof"³.

Riel was in earnest, and would not allow happenings around him to be treated in such a light vein by his organ and become food for ridicule among outsiders. So the edition was suppressed.

Yet that same Gaddee who, we repeat, must have been some queer personality, was soon to be at the hands of Riel himself the victim of what many will see in the light of a bad joke, which was considered deserved by the part the halfbreed had played in the Portage rising. Having been apparently condemned to death for treason, he was led to the place of his would-be execution, and placed on his knees awaiting the shots of six armed men, when Riel came on the scene and, tapping him on the shoulder, addressed him in this way:

"Get up, Gaddee, we do not mean to do you any harm. But remember that henceforth you are dead. You will stay hidden here a few days, and then we will have you pass secretly into the United States".

Instead of following those well-meant directions — the expectation of his execution, coupled with exile, being considered sufficient punishment for his fault—the foolish man thought it better to escape under circumstances of particularly great discomfort, and showed his gratitude, or thought of reeking his revenge, by

³ Ap. Begg's *Creation of Manitoba*, p. 274.

spreading ridiculous stories about a priest administering Holy Communion (!) at the very place (!!) of his execution, to impart strength and courage to executioners who shrank from the task of shooting him! Such is the gullibility of some non-Catholics that they cannot see the unparalleled absurdity of such a statement, but publish it as incontestable truth ⁴.

This was a private transaction, something of the nature of a joke behind closed doors of which few will approve. Of it the public knew nothing ⁵, though some manifested some uneasiness at the secrecy surrounding Gaddee's whereabouts ⁶. Something more serious was in store for those among the sempiternal malcontents who were responsible for their ever renewed opposition.

Riel felt, or professed to feel, that to put a stop to their plots, an example must be made of the leader of the latest rebels, Major Boulton, who, since his arrival in the country, had done nothing but organize and drill companies of forces intended to foster civil war in a land to which he did not even belong, and where he had just very nearly brought about the death of unknown numbers of naturally peaceful citizens of both origins. So the young officer was passed before a court-martial and condemned to death for treason. He could not deny having raised the banner of revolt against the

⁴ Cf. Hill, *Hist. of Man.*, p. 299. Fr. Dugas is scarcely right when, taking for having happened what was only contemplated, he writes that G. "was taken to the American frontier and exiled from the Red River" (*Hist. véridique*, p. 167).

⁵ Except through subsequent ridiculous reports.

⁶ Begg speaks in this connection of the "feeling of horror which this mysterious affair occasioned" (*Op. cit.*, p. 291).

Government legally formed by both sections of the population⁷.

Whereupon Boulton asked for, and obtained, the permission to receive the visit of Archdeacon McLean to prepare him for death, as he was to be shot at twelve of the following day.

Now Maj. Boulton was really a fine gentleman, "a young and brave officer of beautiful presence and distinguished manners", writes Father G. Dugas, who knew him well⁸. He had simply been the dupe of such agitators as Schultz and Dennis, and had always acted openly. For that reason, nobody relished the idea of seeing him come to an untimely end. Thanks to the Anglican Bishop of Rupert's Land and Archdeacon McLean, thanks also to Commissioner Smith and especially to Father Lestanc, who had from the start been for peace at any price and, above all, against the shedding of blood, his execution was delayed until the 19th. of February.

The gallant officer had also other intercessors. For the second time, Miss V. McVicar devoted herself to the cause of mercy, and went with Mrs. Sutherland and her daughter, Mrs. Black, to plead for the life of the condemned man.

⁷ Nay a government which the Canadian Special Commissioner himself recognized, as we know independently from O'Donoghue's declaration, through a letter addressed to no less a person than the Premier of Canada by the Hon. Charles Tupper, who had gone to Red River for his daughter, the wife of that officer of the "blawsted fence" memory, warlike Capt. Cameron. Tupper wrote: "Mr. Lemay [a prominent adviser of Riel, he says in the same epistle] tells me that Mr. Smith went before the Council and said, as the officer of the Hudson's Bay Company, he was prepared to acknowledge the only Government he found in the country" (*Correspondence*, p. 116).

⁸ *Histoire véridique*, p. 167 note.

Riel received them in the Council's Chamber; but when he ascertained the object of their visit:

"No, Mrs. Sutherland, he said, Boulton must die, at twelve o'clock! I hold him accountable for the death of your son⁹, the first bloodshed since the resistance to my Government began, and he must pay the penalty. A life for a life! He is guilty of the death of a man born on the soil of this country, and he must die for it"!

All Riel's contemporaries admit his eloquence, and it is not difficult to imagine what a splendid occasion he then had to show it. But the poor mother was bound to gain her point. She insisted, and every endeavour failing, she threw herself on her knees, beseeching the President to spare Boulton's life.

That was too much for the legendary "heartless man" of credulous Orangemen. He stopped pacing up and down and, resting against the end of the table, covered his face with his hands. After a pause, during which he must have felt as keenly the good lady:

"That alone has saved him, he said between two sighs; I give you Boulton's life"¹⁰.

He then immediately went out to Mr. Smith and, hiding from him his decision, so as to bring him to co-operate in an enterprise he had much at heart, he said to him:

"Hitherto I have been deaf to all entreaties. If I now grant you this man's life, may I ask you a favour?"

⁹ John Hugh S. V. preceding chapter.

¹⁰ *Women of Red River*, pp. 226-27. "When Major Boulton was a free man, he came straight from Fort Garry to our house, to thank my mother", said Mrs. Black (*Ibid.*, p. 227). V. Ch. XV, note 22.

"Anything that in honour I can do", answered the Commissioner.

Riel continued:

"Canada has disunited us; will you use your influence to reunite us?"

Smith answered that he would use his whole heart to effect a peaceable union with Canada. Whereupon Riel asked him, and Smith promised, to persuade the English parishes, now somewhat disaffected by the late events, to send delegates to the Council the formation of which had been decreed by the Convention of Forty ¹¹.

Thus it was that wily Riel made Canada's representative work for the furtherance of his own ends, leaving him under the impression that he was sparing Boulton's life thanks to his intervention ¹².

Mr. Smith went out, accompanied by Archdeacon McLean among the various English centres of population, and pressed the people to elect councillors, to help and advise the Provisional Government. This put the President in good humour, though, of course, he could never be free of worry.

For instance, the report was at that time circulated that, taking example from the whites of Portage la Prairie, the Indians in the vicinity of that place were now coming to attack the Settlement. Riel had to station a party of men at Lane's Fort, on the Assiniboine, in order to afford protection to the people of that region, while he decreed that all persons to and

¹¹ Brit. Blue Book, pp. 154-55.

¹² These details were communicated to us privately by the late Sir Joseph Dubuc, Chief Justice of Manitoba and a former schoolmate and bosom friend of Riel's, from whom he had them himself.



Courtesy of the H. B. Co

LORD STRATHCONA

(D. A. Smith)

from the Portage be furnished with a pass from himself, so as to obviate the possibility of suspicious characters going to incite them to trespass on the inhabitants of the Settlement.

To further show that such restrictions to personal liberty under exceptional circumstances were not the result of autocratic dispositions, but that he was ever ready to oblige, especially the English, when the right thing was done, we glean the following little incident from the book of one who was certainly not Riel's friend, the Rev. A. C. Garrioch, who had gone to see him on business.

"The political discussion being apparently ended, I relieved myself of the following courteous little speech, which I had all ready by the time Mr. Fraser picked me up on the way:

" 'Mr. President, I have a brother residing in the Settlement who is desirous of paying Portage la Prairie a visit, and he has requested me to procure a pass from you to enable him to do so.

"Quick as a flash came the answer:

" 'Certainly, I shall be most happy to hand him a pass; but tell your brother for me that I should very much like to see him before he leaves' " ¹³.

Everything, therefore, now seemed brighter than ever, and, despite the disoblighing, if not slanderous,

¹³ Garrioch, *First Furrows*, p. 234. Immediately after this little account of his visit, the clergyman adds: "Need it be said George Garrioch avoided President Riel, preferring to reach home by making a wide detour over the trackless prairie". Why this avoidance of a man who has just shown himself rather kindly? Would it be that the prejudiced cannot see a kindness? We should have thought that Garrioch had every reason to be pleased with his interview. But to the bitter all things are bitter.

innuendoes of writers who never did, perhaps because they never would, understand Riel ¹⁴, it is absolutely certain that the whole insurrection would have dragged along the remainder of its ten weary months without any other bloodshed than that for which the Portagers were responsible, if it had not been for the insupportable conduct of a prisoner ¹⁵ who thought himself so much above his despised captors that he thereby wilfully brought his miserable end upon himself. Had he kept quiet, had he refrained from doing his best to breed insubordination among his fellow captives, there is not the shadow of a doubt that not a hair on his head would have been touched.

The incident we are now to relate necessitates some explanations, which may contribute to unduly exaggerate the importance it has received at the hands of hostile writers ¹⁶. But so much nonsense has been penned about it that we cannot let it pass without a few words of comment.

In this connection, we may as well declare that we do not intend to convince those who insist on being led by their prejudices and bias, if not hatred. They are past remedy, and it would be a waste of time to write for their benefit. The aim of these pages is not to shield the guilty or excuse the imprudent, but to explain matters to the fair-minded reader who may have been misled by one-sided writers, to the reader who is

¹⁴ An ogre who, *bon gré mal gré*, must have a victim, they charitably declare one after another.

¹⁵ Whom even Smith calls after Riel in his Report "a rash, thoughtless man, whom none cared to have anything to do with" (*Op. cit.*, p. 156).

¹⁶ An incident which "has received a share of attention altogether out of proportion with its importance", says the *Manitoba Free Press*, 10 April, 1909.

open to the reception of truth, however unpalatable it may be to him.

On the point of giving an account of what was the most regrettable result of the Portage rebellion, a result the remembrance of which has moved a number of Canadians to frenzy and gnashing of teeth, it is the duty of the honest chronicler to set the deed within its proper frame, in other words to bring the student of history, all the better to understand its nature, to realize what kind of a man was the victim of that deed¹⁷, why and under what circumstances the same was perpetrated. To grasp the nature of an act, you must of necessity put yourself in the position of agent and patient, and study all that relates to the same.

Despite the fact that the legitimacy of the Provisional Government could no longer be disputed and that there was no other government in the country, group after group of newcomers kept on agitating and provoking to revolt the natives of the Settlement, and had but lately brought it to the verge of ruin through civil war. A rising was no sooner suppressed than

¹⁷ And for having dared to do so in our *Hist. of the Catholic Church in W. Canada*, we were taken to task by the *Toronto World* of March 20, 1910, which, after admitting that we were "as a rule uniformly fair in [our] treatment of every phase [of our subject]", complained that we went "out of [our] way to blacken the character of unfortunate Thomas Scott". Whereupon we answered that we had scarcely said of the poor man anything that had not already been published by contemporary authors. In any court of justice, all that is known for and against the accused is not only admitted but even deemed necessary to arrive at the proper decision. Would it be just for a magistrate to condemn a man without realizing his character? This would have been the case if we had refrained from giving the proper details about Scott. The reader is the judge: he must be enlightened to be able to pronounce soundly.

another took its place, because some unruly characters could not take seriously the government the country had given itself, and insisted on regarding it as "a miserable farce of playing at government" ¹⁸. Who could help being somewhat exasperated by this ever recurring hostility?

Riel, for one, thought that no peace could be secured unless the ringleaders were brought to bay and finally convinced that, in common with all governments, his had a right to defend itself and was determined to use that right, happen what might.

Among the prisoners due to the last foolish escapade was one Thomas Scott, a new arrival from Ontario, who had already escaped from jail, was known for unsavoury antecedents in the West, and had long proved a thorn in the side of the authorities, both of the former and of the new regime ¹⁹.

He had inaugurated his career in the land by rising at the head of fifteen Canadians against Mr. Snow, the superintendent of the Dawson road, because that gentleman refused to pay them for three days during which they had remained idle, as a protest against the food that was given them. He would probably have succeeded in drowning him in the river had it not been for a French Canadian named Olivier Ducharme, who came to the assistance of the threatened man.

For this outrage Scott was afterwards fined £4,

¹⁸ Adam, *The Canadian North-West*, p. 204. And here we may ask how and why Riel's administration was such "a miserable farce".

¹⁹ In their Letter to Lieut.-Governor Morris, Riel and Lépine later mentioned a second obstreperous party, a "Mr. McLeod", who must have ended by yielding to the former's entreaties to keep the peace, for his name does not appear afterwards.

when he declared that "it was a pity they had not decked Snow, for then they would have got their money's worth" ²⁰.

Issued from a low social stratum, he was of a naturally rough disposition which, in captivity, bordered on actual ferocity ²¹. Yet he was not ill-treated, and must have enjoyed a goodly measure of liberty, for he occasionally managed to get "half drunk" ²² even in confinement. Of late, he had become absolutely unmanageable, striking his guards with his chains and assaulting one of the captains and the President himself ²³.

The latter, especially, was now to him what a red rag is to a bull, and such was the degree of fury which the very sight of the Métis chief could arouse in his breast that, having one day seen him pass by the half-open door, he sprang at him as would a wild beast and, knocking down in his excitement the stool on which he had been sitting, cried out to him with a significant gesture: "Ah! son of a b—, if I ever recover my liberty, it is at these my hands that you shall perish"!

Worse than all, "his example had been productive of the very worst effects on the other prisoners, who had become insubordinate to such an extent that it was difficult to withhold the guards from retaliating" ²⁴.

²⁰ Begg, *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 80.

²¹ In fact, he may have had a streak of insanity in his make-up, as his brother Hugh had later on to be confined to an asylum (Cf. Young's, *Manitoba Memories*, p. 141).

²² Wm. Chambers' Deposition, *Preliminary Investigation and Trial of Ambroise D. Lépine*, p. 54.

²³ As we have seen, even D. A. Smith called him in his Report "a rash, thoughtless, man, whom none cared to have to do anything with" (Brit. Blue Book, p. 156).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, *ibid.* That Report has "subordinate", evidently for "insubordinate".

Out of patience at his aggressiveness, his guards one day dragged him out, and were about to sacrifice him when one of the French councillors rescued him from their hands.

On March 1st., Riel was told of the prisoner's conduct and learned that several of his fellows, encouraged by the impunity which rewarded his antics, now shared his insubordination. The guards assured him that an example must be made, else it would be impossible to keep any prisoner. The President endeavoured to calm them down, and entreated Scott to be peaceful and act as a reasonable man, under pain of having to face a terrible fate, as veiled hints commenced to be made that if his outrages remained unpunished, Riel himself might have to answer for them.

Whereupon the irrepressible Orangeman merely "sneered [at his interlocutor] and insulted [him]"²⁵. Having that very day renewed his provocations and defied his guards, whom he dubbed "a pack of cowards"²⁶, Riel managed to temporize two more days, after which he had to yield²⁷ and allow the

²⁵ Cf. Riel's own account first published by the writer in his *Aux Sources de l'Histoire manitobaine*, pp. 87-88.

²⁶ Paul Proulx, an eye-witness, in *La Libre Parole*, Winnipeg, 18 Avril, 1918. Will the reader believe that there is not an English author who has one word, one single word, to say of those provocations by the prisoner and of the patience of his "devilish assassin", that is Riel!

²⁷ By which it will be seen how much truth there is in Tuttle's explicit statement that, "having spared Major Boulton, he cast about for a suitable victim" (*Hist.*, p. 494). As to Capt. Huyshe, he unhesitatingly assures us that, "on the 4th. of March, swayed by what motives of policy or revenge it is hard to say, this capricious tyrant... caused one of the prisoners, Thomas Scott, to be tried by court-martial. The mock court", etc. (*The Red River Expedition*, p. 17). We wonder why it was a mock court.

“incorrigible”²⁸ man to be summoned before a court-martial.

The members of this were G. Ritchot, André Nault²⁹, Elzéar Lagimodière, Baptiste Lépine and Joseph Delorme, under the presidency of Adjutant-General Ambroise D. Lépine. Supported by a number of witnesses, Riel acted the part of the public prosecutor³⁰, while Joseph Nolin was secretary, and swore in the witnesses.

He accused Thomas Scott of having taken and broken an oath not to take up arms against the Provisional Government — a charge made in good faith, as the prisoner was known to be now for the second time in prison, which we nevertheless think would have

It is hard to be more cruelly untruthful. But most English authors would seem to become more or less irresponsible, if not the prey of uncontrollable dementia, whenever they have to mention the relations between Riel and Scott. They would apparently think they render themselves guilty of something like lese-nationality if they were, not saying a kind word, but truthfully explaining the reason of his acts, when it is a question of the former.

²⁸ *Ap. Smith's Report*, Brit. Blue Book, p. 156. See also notes 21 and 29 of this chapter.

²⁹ Or “Andrew Malt”, as Robert Hill so accurately calls him, p. 293 of his *History*!

³⁰ As well as “judge”, if we are to believe such veracious authors as Robt. Hill (*op. cit.*, p. 293 and other English “historians”) as, we regret to say, even our old friend the Rev. Mr. Garrioch, who goes to the length of writing: “He dared to arrogate to himself the position of both ruler and judge, and to immolate a human being to the altar of his inflated vanity and fiendish hate” (*First Furrows*, p. 237). Our readers must by this time be in a position to see on which side hatred was. They can also make sure by what follows whether the whole accusation is not short of nonsensical to one who knows the real facts.

been hard to prove, for Scott had previously escaped without taking the usual discharge oath. He also accused him of having afterwards struck his guards, a captain and the President himself, inveighing at the same time on the pernicious influence, leading to general insubordination³¹, he was exercising over the other prisoners, etc.³².

But the witness who, put on oath, testified to that effect, must have been wide of the mark, for most of the later "historians" who never as much as saw Riel or Scott, are positive that Scott was condemned "because he had been the most outspoken in his expressions of loyalty to his Queen"! It is none other than Lord Wolseley who made that wonderful discovery³³. "His only crime", he gravely assures us, "was that he was loyal to his Queen and country"³⁴, while Capt. Huyshe no less religiously follows in the footsteps of his superior when he tells us that Scott's "only crime had been loyalty to his Queen and country"³⁵!

Other writers, who ought to have known better and who put forth claims to be taken seriously, have not blushed to repeat that preposterous accusation dictated by blind prejudice. Of course, there never was the

³¹ A charge which cannot be in the least surprising of a man who is expressly said by Dr. Black to have been a "hot-headed, irrepressible and irresponsible Orangeman" (p. 149 of his *Hist. of Saskatchewan*). Yet another English author, W. T. R. Preston, is quite sure that Scott "had not been in the least offensive to the half-breeds" (*The Life and Times of Lord Strathcona*, p. 42; Toronto, s. d. [1915])!

³² Jos. Nolin's deposition, in *Preliminary Investigation*, p. 59.

³³ *The Red River Expedition*, p. 219.

³⁴ *History*, p. 394.

³⁵ *The Red River Expedition*, p. 20.

remotest question of the Queen's authority, for which Riel, not being an Orangeman, professed a much more real respect than Scott, who would have thrown it to the winds if the lady had become a Catholic.

On the other hand, the prisoner's country was Ontario, which had no manner of claim over the Red River Settlement, and he could not be truthfully represented as "devoted" to the West, against which he could not have more effectively worked than he did even if he had tried to ³⁶.

Nor was this all. Even such outrageous untruthfulness pales before Wolseley's assertion that Scott's executioners "were at the same time addressed by a French priest on the ground where it [the so-called murder] was committed, and told they were about to perform a righteous act" ³⁷. Such is the way soldiers can write history!

But let us return to the trial of Scott. The proceedings of the court were duly translated to the accused by Riel himself ³⁸. Yet, with their usual tactics of truth distortion, English authors are practically

³⁶ Would the reader learn of still another no less ridiculous cause for Scott's untimely end? This is supplied by a minister of the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. MacBeth who writes quite seriously: "In their cold quarters in Fort Garry, the prisoners used to keep themselves warm by wrestling and sparring. Scott is said to have taken a few rounds out of the guards, and Riel treated that as contempt of his high authority; and so a kind of trial was held", etc. Just think of it: a prisoner condemned to death for having beaten his guards in a game of sport! Who can help wondering how a clergyman does not see how ridiculous he makes himself by treating so lightly so serious a subject?

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 220.

³⁸ *Preliminary Investigation*, p. 59. See next note.

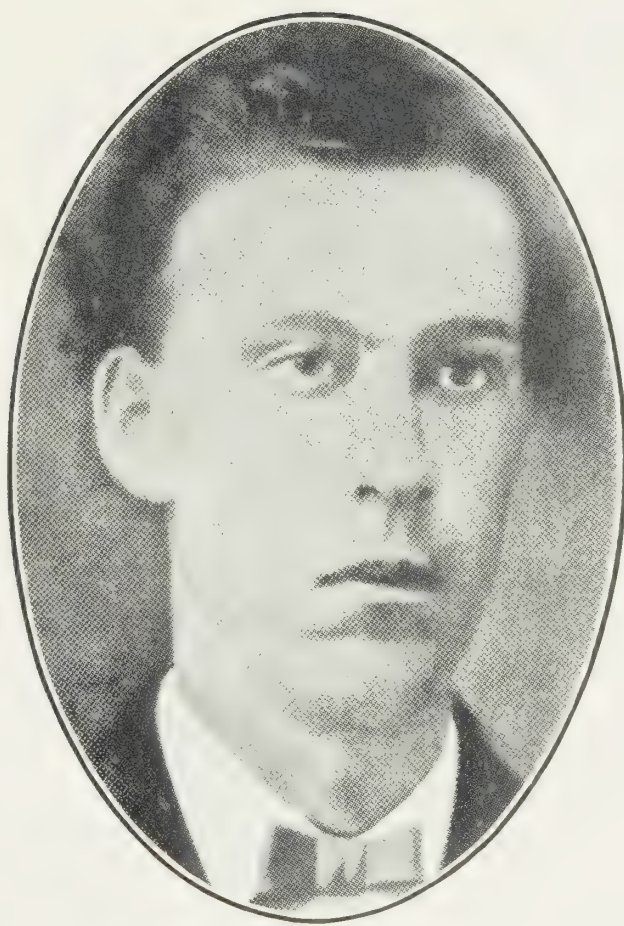
unanimous in declaring that the poor man did not know one word of what was said ³⁹.

Four, out of the six members of the court-martial, were for death; Lagimodière voted that it would be better to exile the prisoner, and Baptiste Lépine voted

³⁹ Such, at any rate, is the explicit contention of those who give a somewhat detailed account of the trial without reproducing Jos. Nolin's sworn evidence of 1874. "He", affirms veracious Wolseley who was then far away, "was arraigned before a mock court (why 'mock'? might it not be that to the favourite of Mars this was because made up of French Catholics?)... The French language only was used" (*Narrative of the Red River Expedition*, p. 220). Later on, Adam claimed as truthfully that Riel "took care to... keep him in ignorance of the crime of which he was accused. He did not know the language and purport of the proceedings" (*The Canadian North-West*, pp. 205-06).

Nay, even at this late date, when there has been plenty of time to study contemporaneous documents and ascertain the real facts, Schofield dares write that "when the accused man was summoned before the co-called court (always the same story: not being composed of English-speaking Britishers, it could not have been a proper one), he stated that, not understanding French, he did not know the charge against him [what a delightful ignorance, after he had been repeatedly cautioned against his outrageous conduct!]; yet no interpreter was provided" (*The Story of Manitoba*, p. 274).

Verily and truly, there is no one so blind as he who deliberately shuts his eyes to the most indisputable evidence! Had not that author, F. H. Schofield and others, wilfully done so, they would have seen the following in Nolin's sworn deposition in 1874: "Riel sent for Scott... Edmund Turner and Joseph Delorme were witnesses... Riel made the charges against Scott verbally; Riel was sworn to prove his charge by me... Turner was there during the trial and gave evidence... and heard Riel explain and *translate* to him [Scott] his charges and the sentence of the Court; I think Turner was an Irishman; I don't think Scott asked to examine the witnesses himself... *Riel was speaking English*; Turner was speaking English" (*Preliminary Investigation*, p. 59).



THOMAS SCOTT

against the death penalty. Whereupon the president of the same exclaimed:

“The majority is for death; he shall be put to death”.

When it became known that this time there was surely to be an execution, several parties, among whom D. A. Smith, Father Lestanc and Rev. George Young, a Methodist minister, begged Riel to pardon the doomed man. It is said that the President was personally averse to having the sentence carried out⁴⁰. Therefore when approached on the subject of a reprieve, he consulted Adjutant-General Lépine, who answered by a vigorous “no”.

And it may as well be added that, despite his own aversion to the shedding of blood, Riel was not a little embarrassed as to what was best to do with his prisoner. His further stay in jail had become impossible; exile would have scarcely been more advisable: a man of Scott's stamp, perfectly infuriated as he was by the most unreasoning fanaticism⁴¹, would not have remained twenty-four hours south of the frontier. Such a measure would therefore have been tantamount to

⁴⁰ Paul Proulx (who was in the Fort at the time) in *La Libre Parole*, Winnipeg, April 18, 1918. We have already seen how he had pardoned Gaddee, whom he had imprisoned merely for the sake of effect on the perturbators of the public peace, and how he had been rewarded for his clemency. He certainly was not for bloodshed, and this explains why the first reports of Scott's execution were disbelieved, “because he had once hidden a prisoner, and reported that he was dead, for the purpose of frightening the other prisoners and the ‘loyal’ [that is pro-Canadian] portion of the people” (Tuttle, *Hist. of Man.*, pp. 421-22).

⁴¹ His great apologist, Capt. Adam, has himself to admit that the poor ignorant man had become “a bitter and outspoken foe of the *Catholic* usurpers” (*sic*) (*Can. North-West*, p. 205).

courting additional trouble at a time when things seemed to promise a much needed public peace.

Finally, such were the terrible dispositions of the man and the blind hatred he entertained for Riel, that the latter's life would not have been worth much after his lapse from a position which he knew was to be temporary if his present "irresponsible" prisoner, was allowed to go free ⁴² — a measure which would, moreover, be looked at in the light of a premium to insubordination by the other prisoners.

As, on the other hand, the poor man, who affected to disbelieve that the Métis were in earnest, could not be relied on to mend his ways, Riel deemed it better not to interfere with the finding of the court. The Rev. G. Young was therefore called to assist Scott to meet the fate he had wilfully brought on himself and which, even then, he could probably have averted by a sincere promise of self-amendment.

This was on the 3rd. of March. The execution was to take place at ten in the morning of the morrow ⁴³; on the recommandation of his chaplain, this was put back till noon of that day.

At the appointed time, Scott was taken out of the Fort with six armed men rather the worse for the drink they had absorbed to steady their nerves. Of

⁴² "Riel feared Scott", writes Rev. Garrioch (*First Furrows*, p. 236), who is perhaps more accurate in this than he may think. "He represented to his people that Scott was a dangerous man, and if he ever got at large, he would get his revenge" (Boulton, *Reminiscences*, p. 128).

⁴³ "With inhuman cruelty his execution was ordered to take place at noon *the same day*" (Huyshe, *Red R. Expedition*, p. 17). We should like to know if there be more than one-tenth of the assertions of such anti-Riel writers which can stand the scrutiny of a real historian.

course, in this connection also, the usual amount of falsehood was to crop up in the minds of prejudiced authors. To make it short and yet plain, here is briefly what then happened.

Struck by three bullets—for, out of a feeling of delicacy of which those who imagine the French half-breeds to have been little more than savages would not have thought them capable, only three muskets had been loaded with ball ⁴⁴ — the doomed man groaned and fell to the ground. Which seeing, some one cried out:

“Put him out of his misery”.

Then a French Canadian named Guilmette ⁴⁵ advanced quite close to him, pistol in hand, which he put “to his head and fired” ⁴⁶, a well-meant act which some of the French none the less resented as useless cruelty saying:

“What is the use to finish a man who is dead” ? ⁴⁷

This last remark flatly contradicts later stories to the effect that Scott long survived the four wounds he

⁴⁴ So that nobody could know whether he had been instrumental in his death or not.

⁴⁵ Or at least the son of a French Canadian, for some believe him to have been a Métis. He went also by the name of Deschamps, after that of the family who had brought him up, and had likewise received the popular nickname of *Bonnet-Fromage*, for a reason we do not know. He was to be killed shortly after the Insurrection. — His portrait can be seen in our group facing p. 240.

⁴⁶ Rev. Mr. Young in his deposition, p. 47 of *Preliminary Investigation*, “The ball”, it is said, “entering the eye and passing round the head” (Huyshe, *op. cit.*, p. 19).

⁴⁷ The late Victor Mager, a respectable Alsatian who was an eye-witness, in a letter to the author. Pioneer of pioneers, that real gentleman did not die before the 27th. of June, 1930, after having lived 71 years in what became Manitoba.

had received. If there had been the shadow of a doubt that the poor man did not die of them, and rather quick too, one who would not have failed to know and state it was his own chaplain, who described his end in a book ⁴⁸ and in the testimony he gave four years later under oath. But he never wrote in that sense until he had been put to it by others — and this is a good example of how the fables in this connection grew with time.

The body was then claimed for interment. But, fearing that the disposal of it might occasion hostile demonstrations and his grave become the seat of periodical breaches of the peace, Riel refused to comply with the request. It was provisionally buried in the fort, then taken out the following night ⁴⁹. Where-to was it carried? To the river, they all claim; to the Assiniboine, answer some, to the Red, according to others ⁵⁰. It was never found, nor will it ever be. For we happen to know, on the very best of evidence, that neither hypothesis is correct, unless it be taken as relating to the way of transit only.

The question of the final disposal of Scott's remains has ever been of burning interest to some, and no means have been left untried by others, his brother

⁴⁸ *Manitoba Memories*, pp. 134-38.

⁴⁹ So that, after the Insurrection, a party of people who had gathered to exhume it were badly disappointed in not finding it there.

⁵⁰ This legend of a watery grave has prevailed until the present day, and, but a few weeks ago, we found it in an even exaggerated form in a French book entitled *Les Roux*, which still emphasizes the following by means of italics: "In reality, the Hudson's bay had paid four men \$500.00 each to tie up Scott's corpse with big block chains (*chaînes à billots*), and very secretly plunge it by night into the river" (*Op. cit.*, Montreal, 1932; pp. 34-35).

Orangemen, to discover their last resting place, in spite of the fact that some wily Métis, building on their own surmises, several times deceived them into the belief that they were the possessors of the secret⁵¹. This secret is now known of no living person except the writer, who acquired it without any of the actors in the little nightly drama having violated his oath never to reveal what had been done with the body.

For that reason, we should not wonder if, to quite a number of readers, one of the most important statements in this volume is to be found in the pages which just follow. To tell what we know on that point, we see ourself forced to divulge an incident of a personal nature, to the perfect truth of which we are prepared to swear.

Wishing to elucidate that question, though quite careful not to let it appear that such was our purpose, we had, some twenty years ago, secured an appointment with one of the participants in the above mentioned drama, André Nault, at Riel's own house in St. Vital, after which we would visit another at his home in Lorette, Elzéar Lagimodière, Riel's maternal uncle. An important funeral in St. Boniface kept out the former [Nault] longer than anticipated, but providentially, as it seemed to us, rendered the old man

⁵¹ Rev. Mr. MacBeth goes even so far as to write after one of them: "The body, weighted with chains, was put through a hole in the ice into the river, as I learned in later years from one who was there when it was done" (*The Romance of Western Canada*, pp. 156-57). Now Mr. MacBeth may believe us or not, but we hereby assure him that he was shamefully imposed upon. There was, some years ago, a certain L — who made it a business (and a profitable one too) to go amongst Orangemen and boast that "he knew it all", while the same fellow knew absolutely nothing, and the Métis of the former generation were aware of it.

more talkative than he might otherwise have been. He was not exactly the worse for liquor, yet he had become less guarded in his speech.

Seated in a rig behind him and the driver, Joseph Riel, who knew nothing of the case, we nonchalantly skipped as we went on in our queries from one phase of the insurrection to another, through all of which the old man had been, so as to throw him off his guard as to our real aim, and, adding one thing to another, this is what we learned.

Some time after midnight following Scott's execution, Louis Riel, accompanied by tried men, his own relatives, André Nault, Elzéar Lagimodière and Damase Harrison ⁵², went to the bastion where lay Scott's body and put it on a sleigh ⁵³. Then Riel swore before God and his companions that, to his last hour, he would not reveal what they were going to do with it, an oath which was then repeated by each one of the others, and they left for unknown parts.

Arrived at this crucial point in his cross-examination, the writer was careful to manifest the greatest indifference as to that destination, but rambled about from one desultory detail to another in his questions. Then suddenly, as if a matter of no importance was presenting itself to his mind, he asked:

"If you were about the spot where you took the body, could you point to the exact place where you put it" ?

Quick as lightning came the answer, given with a knowing little chuckle:

"*Quant à ça, non; y en a trop*; as to that, no; there are too many of them"!...

⁵² Who died long ago.

⁵³ Which had belonged to Dr. Schultz.

The cat was out of the bag, and, to prevent remorseful confusion and feigning not to realize the import of those four words *y en a trop*⁵⁴, the questioner hastened to direct the conversation into other channels. That little phrase none the less contained the key to the whole secret. On the other hand, it stamps the Métis as much more honourable and less free with a Christian body than their present day detractors would fain believe them to have been.

To him who is familiar with the topographical details of Winnipeg and the course of its main river, it is scarcely necessary to explain that the four men drove Scott's remains down the Assiniboine and then the Red, to St. John's Protestant cemetery, situated by the bank of the latter, where "there are too many" graves to allow, after fifty years, of anybody picking up that of Scott, which remains, of course, unmarked by any particular sign⁵⁵.

So that, instead of leaving to Mr. Young or the Bishop of Rupert's Land the trouble of consigning Scott's body to the bosom of mother earth, the wily Métis did it themselves in the very ground where it would otherwise have been buried. The stories of a watery grave were therefore a blind to throw people off the scent. Strange, is it not, that no one should have ever thought of that⁵⁶!

⁵⁴ Colloquial French for *il y en a trop*.

⁵⁵ That graveyard has long been full.

⁵⁶ All the participants in that little night outing have been dead a long time.

CHAPTER XV

HARMONY IN THE WEST GROSS ILLEGALITY IN THE EAST.

Such was, without attenuation or exaggeration, what English authors are now unanimous in proclaiming the "murder" of Thomas Scott, as if a government duly elected by the representatives of a free people, who possesses no other, had not the right to protect itself against the machinations of its enemies and repress, by the only way it knows, their insubordination when at bay. Poor simple-minded, "half-witted" ¹ Parisien had been done to death by a crowd of strangers with no authority over him; he had been struck on the head with a hatchet and dragged overground till Dr. Black could not help remarking "how pitiable an object [he] was as he saw him lying half unconscious with the blood streaming from [his] wound" ². Not one author gives his death as a murder.

Yet the guileless Métis had not done anything to those who illegally arrested him ³. But when it is a question of a man admitted to have been "hot-headed,

¹ MacBeth, *The Romance*, etc., p. 152.

² *Women of Red River*, p. 223; Winnipeg, 1923.

³ Tuttle, *Hist. of Man.*, p. 388. Of course, Parisien had killed a man, and this goes a long way towards accounting for the rough way we have treated. But the poor devil thought he was doing it by way of self-defence, imagining in his fright that he would thereby get rid of those who were pursuing him with-

irrepressible and irresponsible" ⁴, a man who had been wicked to the point of endeavouring to drown his employer who refused to pay him for work he admitted not to have done; a man who is executed by the only authority of the land, in conformity with the verdict of a regular court, for offences which are carefully concealed from the reader and against the consequences of which he has been charitably warned, then his execution becomes a "dark crime" and a "foul murder"!

Because, for the sake of peace, the head of that Government deemed it safer to allow the sentence to be carried out, he is denounced as "an assassin who wreaked his private spite ⁵ and vengeance against a helpless prisoner" — not helpless enough to be unable to strike his guards and others! The "murder of Scott", they claim, "was a cool, calm, deliberate assassination", and, they continue, "in this foul murder of Scott there is no excuse, no palliation, no justification".

All of which hysterical outcries are not from the vile pages of the mendacious pamphlet we have mentioned in one of our opening chapters ⁶. We find them, along with others of the same kind, in a single page of a volume which passes among English-speak-

out warrant. At all events, as his victim said before dying, "the poor fellow was too frightened to know what he was doing" (*Women of Red River*, p. 223).

⁴ Dr. Black, *Hist. of Sask.*, p. 149.

⁵ As a matter of fact, we do not see anywhere in the official documents, or contemporaneous writers, that Riel as much as knew Scott in a special manner, let alone bear him a grudge for any past offence. He never fretted about him as he did with regard to Schultz, whom he seems to have regarded in the light of a personal enemy.

⁶ Chapter I, paragraph with references to notes 17 and 18.

ing scholars for a fair *History of Manitoba*, that is p. 393 of Tuttle's continuation of Donald Gunn's work of the same name.

The legality of Scott's execution depends on the legitimacy of the Provisional Government, and this legitimacy has been abundantly proven. It is therefore preposterous to speak of a murder in this connection.

At the same time, we will not deny that it was a political mistake. Personally we are free to admit that the offence was not proportionate to the punishment; but to be able to pronounce rightly on this, we must put ourselves in Riel's position and envisage things as they were, not as we wish them to have been: as we have said, further confinement impossible⁷, exile impracticable⁸, and pregnant with danger to the constituted authorities⁹, especially to the chief magistrate himself.

And then, all the better to grasp the situation, let us imagine for a moment that the victim of the execution was not an Orangeman, but one of Riel's few adversaries among the Catholic French of the time. Would there have been such a hubbub, such a racket, such a howl among those virtuous critics, who would fain convert Scott's execution into the "foul butchery" of a lamb?

No wonder, then, if we hear them, taking their wishes for acts, declare that "the execution of Scott

⁷ He was rendering his fellow prisoners insubordinate to the point of making necessary means of coercion which the Métis had not at their disposal.

⁸ He would not have remained among the Americans, whom he hated almost as much as he did Riel.

⁹ By coming back into the Settlement he would have caused new affrays against the Provisional Government.

was the death-knell of Riel's hopes " ¹⁰, and that "from that hour Riel's power waned " ¹¹? It is just the opposite which is true. Hearing of the speedy retribution meted out to the incorrigible agitator, the ringleaders of the malcontents still at large decamped of themselves, and "after this the Provisional Government went on peacefully until the arrival of Colonel Wolseley ". This remark was made on oath by Mr. Bannatyne, of whom Robert Hill writes that "there is no name received with more respect throughout the great Northwest than that of the Hon. A. G. B. Bannatyne " ¹².

As to Begg, whom we know to have been there from beginning to end, though he strongly disapproves of the death of Scott, he goes to the length of writing that, after it, "the Settlement, from a state of extreme excitement, suddenly seemed to have dropped to one of tranquillity. The prisoners were one by one released; the Provisional Government appeared at last to be in working order; a police force was established in the town, and the Settlement, generally, was unusually quiet and peaceable. Business revived, and people felt more security when going about than they had done for some time " ¹³.

¹⁰ Bryce, *Rem. Hist. of the Hudson's Bay Co.*, p. 470. What were these hopes? Securing the recognition of the people's rights which was shortly to take place at Ottawa. But poor Bryce, like many of his ilk, imagined that Riel planned the establishment, with himself at its head, of a permanent and separate State, designed ultimately to fall into the arms of Uncle Sam! When you start by false premises, your conclusions cannot be right.

¹¹ D. J. Dickie, *The Canadian West*, p. 213.

¹² *Manitoba, Hist. of its early Settlement*, pp. 755-56.

¹³ *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 322.

In the face of all this, who can say that the stern measure complained of had not some satisfactory results after all? True, there was still one who secretly did all he could to counteract Riel's action on the people. This was none other than Donald A. Smith, who himself admits that "in some instances [he] found that they [the settlers] had drawn up petitions to Mr. Riel as 'President', expressing submission, etc.; these [he] requested them to destroy, advising that nothing more should be done than under the circumstances was absolutely necessary" ¹⁴. But it is safe to add that, after the calm induced by Scott's disappearance, even Smith could do very little against the Government.

Of course, the extremists who had found the country too hot for their personal welfare merely shifted the theatre of their opposition thereto when they left it. On hearing of Scott's execution, a wind as of sheer dementia seemed to blow over Ontario, not, as a textbook full of inaccuracies ¹⁵ would have it, all over "Eastern Canada", which comprised then as now Quebec, sympathetic to the Assiniboian claims, and the maritime provinces, indifferent to them.

It is even related that some enterprising genius having got hold of a phial, filled it with the blood of some animal and, finding a stray bit of rope, perambulated the towns of Ontario with these treasures, which he exhibited as the blood of Scott and the rope with which he had been bound. Whereupon the guileless shouted and screamed and howled, swearing vengeance on the Métis and hysterically calling for the head of Riel.

¹⁴ In his famous Report, p. 155 of Brit. Blue Book.

¹⁵ *The Story of the Canadian People*, by David M. Duncan, p. 351.

Fanaticism was then so rampant that apparently no one wondered at the unusual forbearance of the "monster" in allowing Scott's sympathizers to gather up his blood that it might be made to serve in stirring up the passions of the thoughtless! Had anyone cared for the truth, he could have found out that, immediately on the shooting of the rebel, Riel had ordered the evacuation of the spot, threatening with imprisonment anyone who would be found there five minutes afterwards.

As to Dr. Schultz, he was likewise going from town to town in his native province, preaching a crusade against the bloody western tyrant and his tools. He was everywhere lionized and received "valuable gifts of watches, of services of plate, with guns with which to shoot the members of the provisional government, and all kinds of nice things" ¹⁶.

Another event which, joined to Scott's execution, contributed not a little to the revival of normal life in the Settlement was the return of Bishop Taché. As soon as the Ottawa Government had realized the seriousness of affairs in the West, they had sounded him through Bishop Langevin, of Rimouski, a brother of the then Minister of Public Works, on the possibility of his leaving Rome, where both prelates were attending the great Council of the Vatican, and returning to help quiet his diocesans.

Although his own representations had formerly met with such scant consideration, the patriotic prelate put aside all personal feelings and, on the 9th. of February, 1870, arrived at Ottawa, where he had several interviews with the Governor-General and some of his ministers. Armed with letters from them, and carry-

¹⁶ Beckles Willson, *Life of Lord Strathcona*, pp. 188-89.

ing to his distracted people a formal promise of amnesty for all which had been done in the West, he set out therefor.

One of the documents he was to communicate to them emanated from the Secretary of State for the provinces, the Hon. Joseph Howe, and contained the following: "It is important that you should know that the proceedings by which the lives and property of the people of Rupert's Land were jeopardized¹⁷ for a time were at once disavowed and condemned by the Government of the Dominion, as you will readily discover in the dispatch addressed by me to Mr. McDougall on the 24th. of December"¹⁸.

Mgr. Taché's impending return was learned on the 4th. of March, and five days later he was again at St. Boniface. There he was grieved not to receive from Riel the welcome with which his children had accustomed him. The very name of Ottawa then jarred on the nerves of the halfbreed leader, who could not be persuaded of the sincerity of its profession of friendliness, and Bishop Taché was known to be the bearer of messages from the Federal authorities.

Hence when the garrison of Fort Garry asked permission to go and receive his blessing, he allowed them to do so, but did not budge himself, remarking: "It is not the Bishop of St. Boniface, it is Canada, that passes".

Moreover he stationed guards at the doors of the palace, a mark of unfounded suspicion which deeply wounded the prelate. Yet, bearing in mind only the interests of peace, the latter went himself two days

¹⁷ This official admission effectively disposes of Dr. Bryce's implicit contention that the greed of the Ontarians in Assiniboia had only "unoccupied lands" for object.

¹⁸ Begg, *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 313.

later to visit the President and other members of the Provisional Government, when, returning to more generous sentiments, Riel granted him a right royal reception.

On the following Sunday (March 13th.), the prelate preached "an eloquent sermon" on the situation, when "the church was crowded to excess". This, according to Alexander Begg, "had a most beneficial influence on subsequent events"¹⁹.

The Council of the Provisional Government, which was to fill in connection therewith the part of a Legislature, had met for the first time on the day of Bishop Taché's arrival. On the 15th. of March, another sitting was held at which Riel pronounced quite a speech urging peace and union, after which the following double resolution was passed:

"1.—That we, the representatives of the inhabitants of the North-West, consider that the Imperial Government, the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Government, in stipulating for the transfer of the government of this country to the Dominion Government without first consulting, or even noticing, the people of such transfer, have entirely ignored our rights as people of the North-West Territory.

"2.—That notwithstanding the insults and sufferings borne by the people of the North-West heretofore—which sufferings still endure—the loyalty of the people of the North-West towards the Crown of England remains the same, provided the rights, properties, usages and customs of the people be respected, and we feel assured that, as British subjects, such rights, properties, usages and customs will undoubtedly be respected".

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

Bishop Taché was then introduced to the Council, and addressed its members as follows:

“ I can well understand the anxiety of the people at the crisis in public affairs with which we have to deal. I believe it to be an anxiety deep and widespread. Let me express the hope, however, that all feeling of this kind will cease. It is a hope grounded on my own conviction that this anxiety is now needless, and that a brighter and better day will speedily dawn on this land.

“ I do not come back, gentlemen, in any official capacity. When I arrived in Canada, it was understood that the people of Red River were sending down delegates; and hence it was not thought necessary to invest me with any powers as Commissioner. The Government pressed me to remain until the arrival of the delegates, but my anxiety of mind was such that I could not delay. I desired to be with my people at a period such as this, and hence I left Canada with all convenient speed.

“ Short as my stay was, however, I had ample opportunity for becoming acquainted with this fact that the intentions of the Canadian Government, as far as the people of this country are concerned, were good and praiseworthy. I can testify that they have no desire to overlook the political rights of the people here. As an evidence of this, I will, with permission, read a telegram from the Hon. Joseph Howe, which I received since my arrival here. . . Mr. Howe says [with regard to the Bill of Rights]: ‘Propositions in the main satisfactory. But let the delegation come here to settle the details’.

“ Let me say, further, that I believe that until recently the people of Canada were in perfect ignorance of the true state of affairs in this country; and it is not to be wondered at, as I myself, even after having

spent most of my life in this country, was very far from knowing the actual state of affairs here until I arrived the other day. I am a Canadian and proud of that title. Many friends you have in Canada, both in the Government and outside. So be assured that nobody is desirous to oppress you " ²⁰.

The good prelate ended his speech by asking the President to release half of the prisoners, which was immediately granted by Riel, who remarked that the remainder would be set free as soon as satisfactory accounts could be heard from Portage la Prairie, which would seem to indicate that he did not yet feel quite at rest as to the intentions of the people in that direction ²¹.

At next day's meeting, O'Donoghue gave notice that he would introduce a bill providing that the hitherto prevailing two-mile hay privilege be converted into fee simple ownership and Riel, true to his promise, released over fifteen of the prisoners, among whom was Major Boulton ²².

Then the delegates to Ottawa left, Rev. Mr. Ritchot and Mr. Alfred H. Scott, with Col. de Salaberry, on the 23rd. of March ²³, and Judge Black, accompanied by Mr. Boulton, on the morrow. Their credentials were as follows:

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

²² " Mr. Boulton came to the Bishop's House, to thank me for the favour I had obtained [that of his reprieve when sentenced to death]. He said: 'I owe you my life; how can I thank you?' He was so grateful that he touched my heart, and he promised never to forget the favour obtained at our hands" (From a lecture delivered by Father Lestanc at Calgary, 4th. of March, 1909, and reported by the press of the West).

²³ Dom Benoît, *Vie de Mgr. Taché*, vol. II, p. 69, says March 22.

“SIR:—Enclosed with this letter you will receive your commission, and also a copy of the conditions and terms upon which the people of this country will consent to enter into the Confederation of Canada. You will please proceed with convenient speed to the city of Ottawa, Canada, and, on arriving there, you will, in company with [the other delegates], put yourself immediately in communication with the Dominion Government on the subject of your commission.

“You will please observe that, with regard to the articles numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 15, 17, 19 and 20, you are left at liberty, in concert with your fellow commissioners, to exercise your discretion; but bear in mind that, as you carry with you the full confidence of this people, it is expected that, in the exercise of that liberty, you will do your utmost to secure their rights and privileges, which have hitherto been ignored.

“With reference to the remaining articles, I am directed to inform you that they are peremptory. I have further to inform you that you are not empowered to conclude finally any arrangements with the Canadian Government; but that any negotiations entered into between you and the said Government must first have the approval of, and be ratified by, the Provisional Government, before Assiniboia will become a province of the Confederation ²⁴.

“I have the honour to be, Sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“THOMAS BUNN,

“*Secretary of State.*

“March 22nd., 1870 ”.

²⁴ This is what was ultimately to happen, in spite of some Easterners, who deprecated the interference of that Government in the matter.

Here is now the commission of the delegates of each of whom the name was within brackets:

“SIR.—The President of the Provisional Government of Assiniboia (formerly Rupert’s Land and the North-West) in council do hereby authorize and delegate you [the delegate] to proceed to the city of Ottawa, and lay before the Dominion Government the accompanying list of propositions and conditions as the terms upon which the people of Assiniboia will consent to enter into confederation with the other provinces of the Dominion. You will also herewith receive a letter of instructions, which will be your guide in the execution of this commission ²⁵.

“Signed this twenty-second day of March, in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy.

“By order,

“THOMAS BUNN,
“*Secretary of State*”.

We will close the list of these official documents by the most important of all, the very last Bill of Rights, the negotiation of whose clauses was the object of their mission to Ottawa. This demanded of the Canadian Government:

“1st. That the territories heretofore known as Rupert’s Land and North-West shall not enter into the Confederation of the Dominion except as a province, to be styled and known as the Province of Assini-

²⁵ By which it will be seen that the delegates derived their powers from Riel’s Government, as representative of the people, whatever the Federal cabinet may have thought of it.

boia ²⁶, and with all the rights and privileges common to the different provinces of the Dominion.

“2nd. That we have two representatives in the Senate and four in the House of Commons of Canada, until such time as an increase of population entitles the province to a greater representation ²⁷.

“3rd. That the province of Assiniboia shall not be held liable at any time for any portion of the public debt of the Dominion contracted before the date the said province shall have entered the Confederation, unless the said province shall have first received from the Dominion the full amount for which the said province is to be held liable.

“4th. That the sum of eighty thousand dollars be paid annually by the Dominion Government to the local legislature of this province ²⁸.

“5th. That all properties, rights and privileges enjoyed by the people of this province up to the date of its entering the Confederation be respected, and that the arrangement and confirmation of all customs, usages and privileges be left exclusively to the local legislature ²⁹.

“6th. That this country be subjected to no direct taxation other than that which may be imposed by the local legislature for municipal or local purposes.

²⁶ While at Ottawa, the delegates received instructions to ask that the new province be called Manitoba instead. This was granted by clause 1 of the Manitoba Act.

²⁷ Granted by clauses 3 and 4 of the Manitoba Act.

²⁸ Thirty thousand dollars *plus* a substantial *pro rata* grant with regard to the population was allowed by clause 25 of the same Act.

²⁹ Provided for, as far as property rights are concerned, by clause 32 of the Manitoba Act.

“ 7th. That the schools be separate, and that the monies for school purposes be divided between the different religious denominations in proportion to their respective population ³⁰.

“ 8th. That the local legislature shall have the right to determine the qualifications of members to represent this province in the Parliament of Canada and in the local legislature ³¹.

“ 9th. That in this country, with the exception of uncivilized and unsettled Indians, every male native citizen who has attained the age of twenty-one years, and every foreigner, being a British subject, who has attained the same and has resided three years in the

³⁰ This clause of the Bill of Rights is not to be found in the version of the same given by the English authors, not even Begg, and some capital has been made out of that omission, some writers going to the length of accusing the chief delegate, Rev. Fr. Ritchot, of having tampered with the document handed him as he was on his way to Ottawa. That gentleman always stoutly proclaimed himself innocent of any such interference, and we personally remember that, in his contention, he was backed by no less a character than the late Sir Joseph Dubuc, who was the retired Chief Justice of Manitoba at the time of his death, and in his youth had been an intimate friend of Riel. Moreover researches in official quarters have shown that Ritchot was right.

In the course of the Lépine trial in 1874, the original of that bill, such as taken to Ottawa from Fort Garry, was handed in to the judge, but never returned to its owner. Fortunately a copy of it, duly certified to conform to the original by a Mr. Daniel Carey, J. P., and registrar of the law courts of Winnipeg, had been sent to the department of Justice in Ottawa, which, in course of time, was found in the Dominion Archives and thence deposited in the official quarters of the Secretary of State.

This claim was allowed by clause 22 of the Manitoba Act.

³¹ Implicity granted by clause 5 of the Manitoba Act.

province and is a householder, and every foreigner, other than a British subject, who has resided here during the same period, being a householder and having taken the oath of allegiance, shall be entitled to vote at the election of members for the local legislature and for the Canadian Parliament. It is understood that this article is liable to amendment only by the local legislature ³².

“ 10th. That the bargain of the Hudson’s Bay Company with regard to the transfer of the Government of this country to the Dominion of Canada be annulled as far as it interferes with the rights of the people of Assiniboia, and so far as it would affect our future relations with Canada.

“ 11th. That the local legislature of this province shall have full control over all the public lands thereof, as well as the right to annul all acts or arrangements made or entered into with reference to the public lands of Rupert’s Land and the North-West, now called the province of Assiniboia ³³.

“ 12th. That the Government of Canada appoint a Commissioner of Engineers to explore the various districts of the Province of Assiniboia, and to lay before the local legislature a report of the mineral wealth of the same within five years from the date of our entering the Confederation.

“ 13th. That treaties be concluded between Canada and the different tribes of the province of Assiniboia,

³² Explicitly granted by clause 17 of the same.

³³ This point and the preceding one conflicting with decisions of the Imperial Government, in 1869, neither of them could be entertained.

by and with the advice and co-operation of the local legislature ³⁴.

“ 14th. That an uninterrupted steam communication from Lake Superior to Fort Garry be guaranteed to be completed within the space of five years.

“ 15th. That all public buildings, bridges, roads and other public works be at the cost of the Dominion treasury ³⁵.

“ 16th. That the English and French languages be common in the Legislature and in the Courts, and that all public documents, as well as all the Acts of the Legislature be published in both languages ³⁶.

“ 17th. That the Lieutenant-Governor to be appointed for the province of Assiniboia should be familiar with the French and English languages ³⁷.

“ 18th. That the judge of the Superior Court speak the English and French languages ³⁸.

“ 19th. That the debts contracted by the Provisional Government of the territory of the North-West now called Assiniboia, in consequence of the illegal and inconsiderate measures adopted by the Canadian officials to bring about a civil war in our midst, be paid out of the Dominion treasury, and that none of the

³⁴ With a view to extinguishing the Indian Title to lands in the province, most generous allowances of land were made to the halfbreeds (half-Indians) by clause 31 of the Manitoba Act.

³⁵ Very largely provided for by clause 26 of the same.

³⁶ Expressly granted by clause 23 of the same.

³⁷ The Lieutenant-Governor having to treat officially with members of the House who may use either of the two languages, the necessity for him to know both goes as a matter of course, and is not specifically mentioned in the Manitoba Act.

³⁸ This is also implicitly allowed by clause 23 of the same.

members of the Provisional Government, or any of those acting under them, be in any way held liable or responsible with regard to the movement or any of the actions which led to the present negotiations.

“ 20th. That in view of the present exceptional position of Assiniboia, duties upon goods imported into the province shall, except in the case of spirituous liquors, continue as at present for at least three years from the date of our entering the Confederation, and for such farther time as may elapse until there be uninterrupted railway communication between Winnipeg and Saint Paul and also steam communication between Winnipeg and Lake Superior ” ³⁹.

Such is the last version of the famous document, the clauses of which were the very *raisons d'être* of Riel's and the Métis' rising and the resulting Government of the whole population of Assiniboia. It was made up of three kinds of claims: political, financial and racial or religious. The first and last, by far the most important in the eyes of the Métis, were all granted, as appears by what was to be called the Manitoba Act; most of the second, which did not conflict with the established rights, privileges and customs of the Federal Government, were also conceded under one form or another.

This consideration alone should entitle the Métis chief to be called the Father of Manitoba, a title he might have received from a grateful population if he had not, quite unwillingly though it may have been, imbrued his hands in the blood of a fellow British subject. But we must not anticipate.

After the delegates had left for Ottawa, the Council went on with its petty legislative labours, and, before adjourning for a month on the 26th. of March, adopted

³⁹ Granted by clause 27 of the same.

the name of Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia. Then the chief officers, President, Clerk of the Assembly, members of the same and Chief Justice, took formal oaths appropriated to the nature of their offices.

Moreover, on April the 2nd., a business understanding was reached between Riel and Mactavish, by which the keys of the various warehouses in Fort Garry were given up to the head of the Hudson's Bay Company and business was ultimately resumed by the latter ⁴⁰.

On April 21st., in deference, mostly, to Bishop Taché's wishes, Riel ordered the Union Jack to be restored to its place of honour in Fort Garry. But as soon as this had been done, O'Donoghue and a few of his immediate followers took it down. This caused a row between the two leaders, and resulted in Riel threatening to imprison the Irishman if he persisted in disobeying his orders. The consequence was that the British standard was again hoisted, and O'Donoghue threatened to leave the fort. Riel rose greatly in public opinion by this act of firmness ⁴¹.

His legislative achievements were not any less valuable. They may even be said to have been remarkable. On the 20th. of May, he caused to come into operation in the Settlement quite a series of laws, almost an entire code, which superseded the former ones, and the thoroughness of which might be compared to the work of experts.

After some provisions of a general nature, one of which is to the effect that "the law of England shall be the law of the land in relation to crimes and misdemeanours", that diminutive code gives out enactments on the administration of justice, various dispo-

⁴⁰ Begg, *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 338.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

sitions on Customs duties and the standing and operations of constables, clauses on intestate estates, regulations for the postal department, rules on the prevention of fires ⁴², the management of domestic animals ⁴³, the cutting of hay on public lands and, above all, on the control of the liquor traffic.

One of these last laws ordered the payment of a fee of ten pounds for a licence to sell spirits, wines and beer, and stipulated that said licence would be granted only on the express condition that the bearer:

1. Should not sell any between the hours of ten at night and six in the morning;

2. Nor to any person, at any time, during Sunday, Good Friday and Christmas Day;

3. Nor at any time to any intoxicated person;

4. Nor should he at any time sell the same to any uncivilized and unsettled Indian, either directly to the Indian, or knowingly on the part of the seller, indirectly to another for an Indian. It was moreover decreed that

5. All manufacturing and selling shall be confined to the premises for which this licence was granted and that

6. The violation of any of these restrictions shall render this licence null and void.

All of which, it must be remembered, was sponsored by a man of partly Indian blood whom prejudiced writers would fain have us believe to have, at least occasionally, been addicted to drinking!

While this wise legislation was betraying in the West real abilities on the part of a set of men, espe-

⁴² In the open prairie.

⁴³ In the rutting season.

cially their chief, whom some authors do not tire of deriding, a dastardly breach of civilized amenities between different commonwealths was being perpetrated in the East. The two first Assiniboia delegates, Fr. Ritchot and Mr. Scott, reached their destination on April 11. Despite the immunity attached to their persons as official representatives of a different country, they were immediately arrested as accessories to the "murder" of Thomas Scott, on the strength of a warrant issued at the request of his brother Hugh.

This flagrant contempt for the provisions of international law was deeply resented in Assiniboia and painfully stirred officials of the Old World in high places as well. These were thereby led to suspect that Canadians were not civilized enough to inspire respect and confidence to the Métis of the West. Earl Granville, Imperial Secretary of State, had from the start taken the greatest interest in the delegates' mission, and seemed to be really worried about the results of the same.

He had already cabled to Sir John Young, Governor-General of Canada: "Let me know, as soon as you can, by Telegram, result of negotiations with Red River Delegates" ⁴⁴. One can therefore imagine how horrified he was to learn that, in defiance of the laws of nations, two of them had been arrested by officials who had no jurisdiction over them, as soon as they had reached the seat of their contemplated negotiations, Ottawa. He then immediately wired from London to the Chief Magistrate of Canada:

"Was arrest of delegates authorized by Canadian Government? Send full information by telegram" ⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ Brit. Blue Book, p. 177.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

This was on the 18th. of April, three days after their arrest in the capital, on the strength of a warrant issued in Toronto by a Mr. McNab, of that place. The Governor-General replied on the following 25th.:

“Delegates discharged by order of the magistrates. Proceedings against them at an end”, and later on a long cablegram of explanations followed from the same party. In another cable of the 18th. of May, Lord Granville manifested his pleasure at hearing of their release ⁴⁶.

The fact was that the envoys of the people of Assiniboia had not only been arrested, but duly tried before a Mr. M. O’Gara, a mere Justice of the Peace. Their case had afterwards been dismissed by a Judge Galt, who had ordered the prisoners to be discharged, “the Police Magistrate of Toronto having no jurisdiction in cases of this kind” ⁴⁷, he decided.

The outrage had none the less been committed, and as far as we know only one author ⁴⁸ has a word of protest against it. A. Scott took it lightly, but that honourable and shrewd gentleman, Father Ritchot, felt it very keenly. Official delegates from a different Government had been treated in Ontario as mere commoners, nay like criminals, and if they had not been sentenced to a term of imprisonment, it was merely due to the fact that the original warrant was found to be invalid because *ultra vires*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴⁸ Beckles Willson, who, in his *Life of Lord Strathcona* (p. 249), calls it “a thing... which was unfortunate in the extreme”. Strange to say, Alex. Begg, who is very usually fair and complete to the point of prolixity in his *Creation of Manitoba*, does not even mention the arrest of the delegates.

Hearing, a while after, of their illegal arrest, O'Donoghue's anti-British temper rose to the boiling point. He tore down and trampled upon the Union Jack hoisted by Riel, whereupon the latter ordered it raised again, and stationed at the foot of the flag-staff his own uncle ⁴⁹ André Nault, one of his most trusted captains, with directions to *shoot* anyone who should try to tamper with it again.

⁴⁹ By marriage, as we know.

CHAPTER XVI

FINAL SUCCESS.

While the situations of East and West were forming such a contrast, unrest and illegality on the one hand, order and peace on the other, an important step was being taken by the Imperial and the Canadian authorities, the aim of which has, in common with so many phases of the Red River Insurrection, been disfigured by the majority of English historians. We refer to the Wolseley Expedition which, with a quasi-unanimity¹ which only prejudice and little regard for truth can explain, is given in more or less covert words as having been designed to avenge the "murder" of Scott.

Most of them plainly hint at such an object as the real cause of that expedition. At the risk of laying ourself open to the charge of useless repetitions, we cannot resist the temptation of showing how wonderfully agreed on this point are those writers.

To commence with one of the most recent, here is how H. A. Kennedy discreetly, but none the less effectively, gives the cause of that military outing²: "Scott

¹ Boulton, Hill and Gunn's continuator being, to our knowledge, the only ones who form the exception. Of course, Begg, who is almost always fair, let alone truthful, is never meant when we speak of "English authors".

² For, as we shall see, though conducted under most trying circumstances, it was scarcely more than an outing with no military character.

was tried by a *rebel* court-martial and shot; his body was pushed through a hole in the *ice* of the Red River. A storm of helpless indignation swept over *Canada*. . . An officer then known as Colonel Wolseley. . . was put at the head of a boat expedition", etc.³ The three words in italics represent as many historical falsehoods, in the same way as the very clear inference presented by the whole conveys a fourth to the mind of the reader: *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*⁴.

The same can be said of another of our contemporaries who, this time, is all the more guilty as he writes for school children. "The news of this brutal murder", he affirms, "raised a storm of indignation in eastern Canada. A force of seven hundred regulars and volunteers was chosen to proceed at once to the scene of the rebellion"⁵. Nobody will deny that we have here an explicit statement of cause and effect.

A third contemporary, whose cloth does not guarantee him against prejudice and consequent error, is Rev. A. C. Garrioch. Nay, in his own polished sentence, his intentions are perhaps even plainer than is the case with the preceding. "When the tidings of the murder of Scott reached Ottawa", he says, "a wave of indignation swept over the country"⁶, and it is hard to say what would have happened had the Government not provided a safety valve for the over-wrought feelings of the people by at once setting about preparations to send an armed force to the Red River Settlement"⁷.

³ *The Book of the West*, pp. 89-90; Toronto, 1925.

⁴ "After this, therefore because of this".

⁵ David M. Duncan, *The Story of the Canadian People*, p. 351.

⁶ What of Quebec?

⁷ *First Furrows*, p. 240.

Does not that author plainly hint that so strained were the Easterners' nerves because of the so-called murder of Thos. Scott, that the Federal Government had to provide some relief to the same in the sending west of a military expedition to punish those who were responsible therefor?⁸

A fourth writer of our own day, more excusable because more excitable, being a woman, Dr. J. Dickie, has it also that "all Canada [was not Quebec then in Canada?] gasped with horror when the dreadful deed [of course, the execution of the turbulent rebel] became known [what of the killing of Hugh Sutherland?]. . . . The Canadian Government at once⁹ ordered troops to Red River"¹⁰. Could this be plainer?

Will the reader have some more feminine inaccuracy? Miss Edith L. Marsh¹¹ writes in the same connection the ritual hysterical phrase to the effect that "the country was roused to its real danger¹², and troops under Colonel Wolseley were *at once* sent to Red River".

If we turn to older authors, we see that, for instance, though the biographer of Sir John A. Macdonald does not directly attribute the organizing of the Red River Expedition to the intention of punishing Riel for the execution of Scott, he is none the less careful to link the one with the other in such a way as to carry the impression that the former was the result of the latter. He writes:

⁸ Scott was executed on the 4th of March; yet Wolseley's troops did not leave Collingwood before the 21st of May!

⁹ An unmitigated untruth.

¹⁰ *The Canadian West*, p. 213.

¹¹ *Where the Buffalo roamed*, p. 171.

¹² It is hard to see what harm Riel could have done to far-away Canada.

“The news of the murder [in the use of this word they are all religiously unanimous] of Scott filled the great bulk of the Canadian public with horror and indignation, and in a few days it was learnt with much satisfaction that General [a promotion by Captain Adam!] Garnet Wolseley... was to be sent to Red River with an ample military force”¹³.

Why was not the killing of Parisien and Sutherland also the occasion of a punitive expedition? Was not the life, for instance, of the son of a future Senator of the Dominion, born in the country, as valuable as that of a stranger who had ever been a thorn in the side of the authorities thereof?

Of course, Wolseley himself, once his task was accomplished, did not feel bound as before to speak of his “mission of peace”¹⁴. He is even more venomous in his account of his Red River Expedition. “Mr. Scott’s murder [always!] caused a cry of execration to resound throughout the English districts of Canada”, he writes. “The press... now preached a crusade, and with such effect that it is almost beyond doubt that had the priestly party [his particular bugbear] in Canada succeeded... in preventing an armed expedition to be sent to the Red River, there would have arisen in Ontario an organization for sending an armed

¹³ G. Mercer Adam, *Life of Sir John Macdonald*, p. 362. Had the incontestable murder of Parisien, arrested for no cause by people who did not as much as know him and put to death in the most horrible manner, in a way unknown to civilization, filled Ontario “with horror and indignation”, and did the French of Quebec clamour for an army to avenge his death?

¹⁴ As he did in his proclamation to the people of Red River, at a time when he did not know how he would be received.

body of immigrants there, sworn to avenge the foul murder which had been perpetrated ” ¹⁵.

He then goes on to describe the forwarding of the military expedition which every reader must therefore infer was formed for the express purpose of avenging the death of the Ontarian agitator.

Nor is Wolseley's own biographer less clear on that point. “ Scott's execution ”, writes Charles R. Low, “ aroused a feeling of intense indignation throughout Canada... Resolutions were passed at public meetings... calling upon the Government to despatch an Expedition to the Red River to restore (!) the Queen's authority (!!) and punish the murderers... Subsequently a call for recruits was made ” ¹⁶. This time the statement is in no longer veiled terms: Wolseley's expedition had for its object to punish those who were responsible for the death of Thomas Scott. Nothing plainer.

After all, that writer hereby does nothing but follow one of the commander's lieutenants, G. L. Huyshe, who had previously asserted that “ when the news of that ‘ cold-blooded murder ’ [oh !] reached Canada... public meetings were held... and resolutions passed, urging the Government to dispatch an expedition to the Red River, to restore the authority of the Queen [which had never been attacked] and punish the murderers of Scott ” ¹⁷. What good copyists are those “ historians ” !

¹⁵ *Narrative of the Red River Expedition*, in “ Blackwood's Magazine ”, Dec. 1870-Febr. 1871, p. 220.

¹⁶ *A Memoir of Lieut.-General Sir Garnet J. Wolseley*, vol. II, p. 6.

¹⁷ *The Red River Expedition*, p. 20. Once more, what would all those authors have thought of Hitler's 77 murders of head-men in a single day, on the mere suspicion of bad political intentions?

The latter officer, Huyshe, then proceeds with the assertion that "an ardent longing to avenge the death of a fellow countryman" was ever "in the heart of every patriotic Canadian", as if they had not been patriotic those natives of the country, the Canadians *par excellence*, whose ancestors had settled in the East and fought for its liberties, *les Canadiens*, whose ancestors were there centuries before those of most people in Ontario had thought of emigrating to Canada!

Now let the truth-loving reader mark our words: the execution of Scott had absolutely nothing to do with the Wolseley expedition, and when its leader says the contrary, he gives expression to a deliberate untruth. That expedition had been decided on and partially organized before anything had been heard of the fate of the Orangeman, and when it was sent west, the Government was careful to let it be known that its aim was quite alien to the purpose of avenging anybody.

We can even add that it was not designed to oust Riel's Government, and the above mentioned authors had at their disposal—or should have had—when they wrote the same means of ascertaining both facts as we ourself possess.

When it was realized at Ottawa that the majority of the people of Assiniboia would not enter Confederation without terms or conditions, the Federal authorities refused to "accept [the] transfer unless quiet possession can be given" ¹⁸. This and Riel's opposition occasioned lengthy correspondence in high quarters, in the course of which the Canadian Government had the good sense to see that "any hasty attempt. . . to force their rule upon the Insurgents would probably result

¹⁸ Sir John Young, Governor-General, to Earl Granville, 27 Nov., *ap. Brit. Blue Book*, p. 12.

in armed resistance and bloodshed", and admitted that "every other course should be tried before resort is had to force" ¹⁹.

Mr. McDougall was not then so sensible, though his remedy to the obstruction he encountered was not without its good points. As early as November, 1869, the thought of asking the East to help him out of his difficulty had presented itself to his mind, and if he had refrained from acting accordingly, it was because he realized that the coming of an armed expedition was a physical impossibility in winter.

"I have hesitated", he wrote, "to call for troops or volunteers from Canada in mid-winter. The difficulties in the way are enormous, and the chance of disaster... is almost reduced to certainty" ²⁰.

But he had other plans to force the Métis to acknowledge his authority: do them out of their share in the government of their own country by swamping this with English emigration. He wrote to the Canadian Secretary of State:

"Preparation should undoubtedly be made for a large emigration in the early spring of those settlers as were offered last fall by Colonel Barivis, of the township of Halifax, and by another gentleman in the county of Bruce. Settlers of this class will be a valuable, almost necessary, addition to the population of the Territory, and any expense which their transportation hither may involve ought to be readily furnished" ²¹.

Negotiations had later gone on between the Canadian and the Imperial authorities with a view implicitly to

¹⁹ Ottawa, Privy Council, 16 Dec., 1869, p. 53 of Brit. Blue Book.

²⁰ To Hon. J. Howe, Brit. Blue Book, p. 56.

²¹ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

assist on those lines, in the course of which it had been agreed by Earl Granville, the British Secretary of State, that military help would be given to Canada "provided reasonable terms are granted Red River settlers, and provided your [Sir John Young's] Government enable Her Majesty's Government to proclaim the transfer of the Territory simultaneously with the movement of the force" ²².

Meanwhile one hundred boats had been constructed to transport the troops over rivers and lakes by way of the old North-West traders' route, and everything was practically in readiness before the Ottawa Government had an inkling of Scott's fate at Fort Garry.

This, we have seen, occurred on the 4th. of March, 1870: above Granville cablegram had, indeed, been sent on the morrow, but *it was not till the following 31st. of that month that the first news of Scott's execution reached official quarters*. And even then it was given as a matter of hearsay ²³. Only on the 4th. of April did the news become authoritative. In the face of this bit of chronology, which the aforesaid authors could have verified as we have done, where is the honest writer who could have seen in the Fort Garry shooting the cause of Wolseley's expedition?

Nor were his troops intended to put a stop to the insurrection, which was commencing to be seen in the light of a legitimate protest and a bid for negotiations. In special instructions to Sir Clinton Murdoch, envoy of the British authorities to the Governor-General of Canada, Earl Granville expressly declared that "troops should not be employed in forcing the sovereignty of

²² *Ibid.*, to Govr. Young, p. 175.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

Canada on the population, should they refuse to admit it " ²⁴.

What then was their object in coming to Red River? We find the answer to that question in official dispatches from, or to, the highest parties concerned in their operations. On the second of April, the British Secretary of State was writing to Sir John Young, Governor-General of Canada:

" With regard to the conditions on which Imperial Troops may be allowed to co-operate with the Canadian force *in supporting order* in that Settlement, I refer you to the Telegram which you have already received and to the oral explanations which you will receive from Sir C. Murdoch, who is in possession of the views of Her Majesty's Government " ²⁵.

Order among the natives of Assiniboia, that is due obedience to Canadian authorities, once established, was therefore the prime object of that Wolseley Expedition. A second, which had reference chiefly to outsiders, was the protection of " Immigrants flowing into that country ", and was " to restrain them from lawless intrusion upon the settlers or upon Indian Tribes which may be calculated to provoke resistance".

So that those troops which are by English historians stated to have been designed as the instrument of the vengeance of the " Canadians " upon Riel and his [the " natives "] had, on the contrary, for object the protection of the latter against the " immigrants " from Canada " flowing into that country "!

This is from no other source than the Canadian Government's own directions to the Hon. Adams George Archibald who, on the recommendation of Sir

²⁴ Cf. Gunn's and Tuttle's *History of Manitoba*, p. 435.

²⁵ Brit. Blue Book, p. 177.

Georges Etienne Cartier²⁶, had been appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the new province of Manitoba on the 20th. of May, 1870, in lieu of McDougall whose political career had now practically come to an end, after the Federal Government had reached an understanding with the Red River delegates²⁷.

That twofold object of Wolseley's expedition was still more clearly enunciated, and all doubt about it set at rest, in another part of said instructions to the first Lieut.-Governor of Manitoba. "You are aware", the latter is told, "that the unsettled state of things in the North-West has compelled the Queen's Government to despatch a military force into that Country, with a view to protect her Majesty's subjects from the possible intrusion of roving bands of Indians by whom they are surrounded, and to give stability to the Civil Government which it will be your duty to organize"²⁸.

These instructions had been issued on the 4th. of August, 1870, that is when the Canadian Federal authorities knew of the Scott execution since exactly

²⁶ Who thereby richly made up for the mistake he had committed by first nominating Wm. McDougall.

²⁷ Mr. Archibald was a serious, prudent, and far-seeing man, kindly without weakness and upright to a fault: the very kind of a ruler needed under the circumstances. Although his very prudence prevented him from redressing as he would have wished the wrongs done the Métis, he managed to do his "best to soothe their feelings" (*Ap. Can. Blue Book*, p. 156), and remained to the end in the best of terms with Archbishop Taché.

Born at Truro, Nova Scotia, on the 18th. of May, 1814, he had become a barrister in the course of 1838. In 1851 he had entered Parliament and been made a Queen's Counsel in 1856. The same year he was appointed Solicitor-General of his native province, Attorney-General in 1860 and Privy Councillor in 1867.

²⁸ *Return: Instructions to the Hon. A. Archibald*, pp. 5 and 6; Ottawa, 1871.

four months. Now we challenge any of the surviving authors from whom we have quoted in the beginning of this chapter, or any of their present friends, to point to one word, one single word, in the eighteen clauses which go to make up that important document, having the very faintest bearing on Scott and his end, or even indirectly blaming the Métis for the line of conduct they had followed.

The only article concerning the latter is No. 9, which directs that land be divided "among the children of the half-breed heads of families residing in the Province at the time of the transfer of the same to Canada" ²⁹.

Yet such is the sway of prejudice over some minds, so little do they appreciate sober truth, that we do not expect to see authors, even after this, uniformly refrain from the ridiculous fable of Wolseley's expedition having been caused by the "murder" of Scott! For the benefit of such readers as prefer truth to fiction, we will now resume our narrative. And first as to conditions in Assiniboia after the execution of Scott. Let us consult our great authority, because an eye-witness and an honest man, Alexander Begg.

After that, he writes, "the Settlement remained in peace, order reigned and business having received an impetus since the recommencement of the Hudson's Bay Company as a commercial body, went on as in the days of old. Money was more plentiful, and a sense of security pervaded the community" ³⁰.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁰ Begg, *Creation of Manitoba*, p. 377. The agitators from the outside were gone, gone also was he who, in his confinement, had never ceased to preach and practise defiance and insubordination to the constituted authorities, Dr. Schultz.

One of the tokens of that general sense of security was the public celebration, that very month, of the Queen's Birthday. On that occasion "people assembled in parties all over the Settlement to enjoy themselves—horse-racing was the principal feature of the day—but altogether so much good feeling existed between all classes that one could only wonder at the change from a few weeks previous" ³¹.

Such were the days of "most torturing anxiety" endured by the people of Assiniboia ³²; the "oppression and plunder" from which Wolseley was soon to deliver them ³³; "the reign of terror", the very thought of which would make him and Capt. Adam shiver ³⁴; the "rod of iron" with which Riel "ruled the country", according to another warrior, Capt. Huyshe ³⁵; the untold "tyranny" from which "the loyal Canadians were suffering" ³⁶, etc.

And as if to counterbalance the effect on the reader of the accounts of such festivities as we have just mentioned, will it be believed that some authors, like a clergyman whose book we have before us as we write,

³¹ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

³² Bryce, *Rem. Hist. of the Hudson's Bay Co.*, p. 471.

³³ Wolseley's Dispatch to his superior, General Lindsay, *ap. Manitoba Memories*, by Rev. Geo. Young, p. 188.

³⁴ *The Canadian North-West*, p. 207. Read also Wolseley's biographer: "The loyal inhabitants [by which is meant the Canadian new-comers, not the real inhabitants]... were ground down under the reign of terror inaugurated by Riel" (*A Memoir of Sir Garnet J. Wolseley*, vol. II, p. 21). Riel was always in the best of terms with the real inhabitants of the Settlement, though these were at times aroused by the machinations of outsiders.

³⁵ *The Red River Expedition*, p. 19.

³⁶ Young, *Manitoba Memories*, p. 145.

stooped to plainly stating that Riel allowed of them for some dishonest reason? Thus Rev. MacBeth goes to the length of writing that, if Winnipeg had its races under the reign of Riel, it was because he wanted "to seize the horses brought there... that he might have the best mounts for his calvary"³⁷. Such are the ways of prejudice! Oh! for a little truthfulness!

Let us now leave Fort Garry and its peaceful celebrations to follow the three delegates it had sent to the Canadian capital. They had just arrived at Ottawa, where two of them had, we have seen, been treated as accessories to crime. Sir John A. Macdonald was then Prime Minister and Sir Georges E. Cartier his right arm. Such was the dread of the former for the fanatics of Ontario that, while very desirous to come at last to an understanding with the representatives of the West, he purposely abstained for a few days from recognizing their official capacity. But he had to deal with a foxy old soul, Father Ritchot, who as firmly refused to be drawn into real work until he had a written acknowledgement of his official rank.

This he received on April 28 through a letter from the Canadian Secretary of State, the Hon. Jos. Howe³⁸,

³⁷ *The Romance of the Canadian West*, p. 157.

³⁸ This is labelled in the Index to the Can. Blue Book "Recognizing them (Ritchot, Black and Scott), as delegates from the North-West", and reads as follows:

"Ottawa, April 26th. 1870.

"GENTLEMEN.—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd. instant stating that, as delegates from the North-West to the Government of the Dominion of Canada, you are desirous of having an early audience with the Government, and am to inform you in reply that the Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Geo. Et. Cartier have been authorized by the

after which the negotiations went on at a good pace, all the more so indeed as the delegates, while insisting on essentials, were quite ready to admit that they had not come to dictate to the Canadian Government, and that the Bill of Rights had not been drafted by expert legists.

They had no fewer than fifteen sittings with the representatives of the Dominion, nine of which were attended by Sir John A. Macdonald himself—this being said for the benefit of such as may imagine that the negotiations were conducted almost exclusively between the Rev. Mr. Ritchot and the head of the French element in Canada—a supposition whereby they would fain explain the fairness, if not generosity, shown the Métis of Red River ³⁹.

Nor should we forget to remark *en passant*, and to show the state of mind of some people at the time, that while Ritchot and companions were thus closeted with Macdonald and Cartier, three Ontarians, two of whom, Drs. Schultz and Lynch, had to a great extent been the cause of the Red River troubles, actually had the cheek to ask to be heard as the real delegates of the West! Of

Government to confer with you on the subject of your mission and will be ready to receive you at eleven o'clock.

“I have the honour to be,

“Gentlemen,

“You most obdt. servant,

(Signed) JOSEPH HOWE.

“To the Revd. N. J. Ritchot, Ptr.,

“J. Black, Esq.

“Alfred Scott, Esq. ”

³⁹ Judge Black could not attend all the meetings.

course, that preposterous proposition did not meet with the least consideration ⁴⁰.

The result of the daily consultations of Riel's official envoys was, as we have already seen, the Manitoba Act, only one clause of which was not worded quite to the mind of Father Ritchot, the head and brains of the delegation, as even Judge Black himself admitted ⁴¹.

This bore on the school question, and events have proved but too clearly that, in this respect, the Westerner was more far-seeing than the Ottawa legists, who seemed otherwise to be animated by the best of intentions.

On the third of May, 1870, the Governor-General of Canada was glad to be able to wire to Earl Granville, in London: "Negotiations with delegates closed satisfactorily. A province named Manitoba erected, containing 11.000 square miles ⁴².

⁴⁰ Judge Prud'homme associates a Rev. Mr. Fletcher with the two ex-Assiniboian worthies, (*Monseigneur Noël-Joseph Ritchot*, p. 100).

⁴¹ "The people of Red River, English as well as French, nay the whole of Canada, owe you much", he wrote him from Ottawa on the 17th. of May, 1870.

⁴² This was to form what was long known as the postage stamp province, and in this connection we find it incumbent on ourself to hit another lie on the head. It has always been contended that the exiguity of the original area of that province was due to the French, who were averse to see it extended to Portage la Prairie, for fear immigration would make them lose the power they derived from their superior numbers. Now hear Father Ritchot in his speech to the Man. Legislative Assembly: "Let me add to what I have stated in regard to the Manitoba Act that at first it was intended that Portage la Prairie should be left out of the province. This had been opposed by the delegates [therefore by himself as representing the French]—those who worked for it were the enemies of the Portage—and as soon as Ministers understood the matter fully, they included the district in the Bill" (Begg, *The Creation of Man.*, p. 380).

“ Lieutenant-Governor appointed by Canada. Representative institutions. Upper House—seven. Not exceeding twelve members nominated. Lower, twenty-four, elected by people. Two senators in Dominion Senate. Four Representatives in House of Commons, to increase hereafter in proportion to population ” ⁴³.

The mission of the Provisional Government was almost accomplished. Despite the persistent opposition of intriguers hailing from the East, on the one hand, and the too prolonged lack of co-operation on the part of well-meaning, but not over perspicacious, settlers, on the other, Riel and friends had obtained their ends, and now deserved well of the new province, which, conceived, as it were, on the third of May through the Act which was then passed and approved in the name of the Queen on the twelfth. was born on the fifteenth of June, 1870 ⁴⁴.

Hence the ridiculousness of those who seem to assume, nay at times do write, that the Métis were beaten

⁴³ Brit. Blue Book, pp. 131-32.

⁴⁴ This is perhaps the place to chronicle the departure from the country of the one who was the most directly affected by the events we have related, ex-Governor Mactavish. Imagining he would recuperate health by a change of climate, he boarded, on the 17th. of May, the steamer *International* for Georgetown, Saint-Paul and old England. “ All were shocked at the feeble appearance of the old man, reduced as he was almost to a skeleton ”, remarks Begg (*Creation*, p. 373). “ Resting on his walking-stick, he tottered slowly along towards the steamer, every now and then casting his eyes around, as if bidding farewell to the scenes of so many years labour ”.

That wreck of manhood did nevertheless manage to reach the port of Liverpool along with his family; but it was only to die there two days after his landing, and those who had stated that, while he lay on his sick bed in the Settlement, he was only shamming, must have felt how guilty they had been in uttering such a vile and untruthful slander on a good man (*Ibid.*, p. 374).

out of their aims ⁴⁵. These aims were fully attained, and Riel could now have stepped aside, had it not been for the fact that the care of public order then required a strong hand at the helm, pending the coming of the new Canadian Governor ⁴⁶.

And had his position needed to have been legalized, this was formally done by Sir Georges Etienne Cartier, then acting Premier of Canada, who directed him through Father Ritchot to stay at the head of affairs till the coming of the Hon. Mr. Archibald.

As to Mr. Ritchot, he did not uselessly tarry in Ottawa, but, immediately after his arduous labours, returned to Red River and reached Fort Garry on the 17th. of June. A salute of twenty-one guns soon announced the success of his mission, and on the 24th. ⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ Dr. O'Donnell, for instance, who surely should have known better (though he had the excuse, scarcely valid, that he did not associate with the Métis—except in their prison—and did not understand their language), goes to the length of representing them as chagrined at “their defeat” (*sic* in his *Manitoba as I saw it*, p. 69). Other English writers speak in the same strain.

⁴⁶ “I then asked Sir Georges who was to govern the country pending the arrival of the Lieut.-Governor and if he was to name somebody to do so. He answered: ‘No, let Mr. Riel continue to maintain order and govern the country as he has done up to the present moment’. He asked me if I thought that Riel was sufficiently powerful to maintain order. I said I thought he was. Then he answered: ‘Let him continue till the Governor arrives’. He also enquired whether Mr. Riel would require that the Governor should take authority as his successor. I answered that he would not; that his government was only a provisional one, and that he would immediately withdraw when the representative of Her Majesty arrived. ‘Very well’, said Sir Georges; ‘let him be at the head of his people to receive the Governor’ ” (Father Ritchot’s deposition on oath, Can. Blue Book, p. 77).

⁴⁷ Tuttle says the 23rd., probably through a misprint.

a special session of the Legislative Assèmbly, as the former Council was now styled, was convened to hear his report. After which, Mr. Louis Schmidt proposed the following resolution:

“That the Legislative Assembly of the country do now, in the name of the people, accept the Manitoba Act, and decide on entering the Dominion of Canada on the terms proposed in the Confederation Act”. This motion was unanimously carried, and the contract entered into by both countries having thereby received its formal approval, Assiniboia passed away to make room for the Canadian province of Manitoba.

Riel and his followers were now jubilant, and no wonder: they had won the day. Jubilant was also Father Ritchot, and he unequivocally showed it in the speech with which he favoured the Assembly. He then effusively thanked the Canadian Ministry for the liberal Constitution they had framed for the benefit of the West; the Dominion House of Commons which had given its passage such a fine majority: 120 against 11; the Queen “whose subject he had always been—whose subject he was that day”, he declared.

Then he added: “But, above all, I have to express thanks and gratitude to a higher Power than all others. I have to thank an ever-ruling Providence for having been led through so many difficulties and dangers. . . While in Canada, let me say it in closing, not only had we all the sympathy and attention we could have expected, but admiration was expressed for the stand taken by the people. . . It is easy to raise objections to the Manitoba Act from the American point of view. I have heard many such objections; but these possess no weight with us”⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ Begg, *Creation of Manitoba*, pp. 379-80.

Finis coronat opus ⁴⁹. Could Riel have wished for more uninterrupted success when he first stepped over the land surveyor's chain? Could he have foreseen a more brilliant achievement of his patriotic aims? He had prevented the ingress of McDougall into the Assiniboia territory and ultimately sent him back, broken-hearted and dishonoured, to those who had directed him thither; he had vanquished the intriguers against his sway, notably Dennis who had to resort to disguise for safety, and Schultz whose iron will-power he had crushed and who had sought life itself in flight; twice he had captured and kept prisoners their unfortunate victims to the total number of 93; above all, he had won the goodwill and recognition of the English part of the population, who had first helped him to organize and manage two Conventions, and then had concurred in his formation of a regular Government, and now, through his delegates in Ottawa, he had gained practically more than he had risen for.

Once more, could he have wished for a more complete success?

⁴⁹ "The end crowns the work".

CHAPTER XVII

AFTERMATH

ABUSE AND LOYALTY.

According to the original plan of this work, it was to end with the preceding chapter, which records the completion of Riel's mission in the Red River Colony. But as the Métis chief was entrusted by Ottawa ¹ with the government of the country "till the Governor arrives", and as subsequent events were to illuminate with a special light the ways of the Métis and those of their opponents, we fear our volume would appear incomplete to most readers without at least a brief account of the same.

The news of the organization of Wolseley's expedition, to the number of about 1.200 men in all ², most of

¹ See note 46 of preceding chapter.

² Two-thirds of this force were Canadian militia, the remainder regular troops from England. The latter consisted of the 1st. battalion 60th. Royal Rifles, 350 strong; of detachments of Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers, twenty men each, with a battery of four 7-pounder brass mountain guns and a proportion of the Army Service and Army Hospital corps... The former were made up of two battalions of Rifles, one for each of the two larger provinces, raised for two years by voluntary enlistmen from the drilled militia. These two battalions were named respectively the First, or Ontario, Rifles,

whom were of "good stuff", that is Orangemen or Orange sympathizers determined to avenge the death of Thos. Scott³, was not long without reaching the banks of the Red. It was perhaps some hint at the real intentions of its members which suggested to Riel the idea of resisting its advance.

As the latter remarked to Archbishop Ireland⁴, a small group of well armed men posted at certain strategic points of the mid-Canadian desert, would have easily stopped, decimated and utterly defeated Wolseley's troops. But Bishop Taché was emphatic against any such interference with that expedition, and, in the face of his opposition, the Métis chief was powerless.

On the other hand, the leader of the incoming British and Canadian soldiers himself took care to allay all fear of ill-treatment at their hands, in a proclamation in which he solemnly declared that his mission was "one of peace", and that "the force [he had] the honour of commanding will enter your Province representing no party, either in religion or politics,

and the Second, or Quebec, Rifles—this, according to Huyshe—, with scarcely 50 French Canadians in its ranks (Cf. *The Red River Expedition*, p. 26).

³ Adam, *The Canadian North-West*, p. 207. "The greatest danger now lies in the temper of many of the volunteers who are keen Orangemen, and who enlisted merely with a desire to avenge themselves upon the French for the murder (*sic*) of Scott" (Mr. D. A. Smith, *ap.* B. Willson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 262).

⁴ Then Father Ireland, who later on himself assured the present writer of it, in a special visit of investigation the latter paid him at the instance of the late Archbishop Langevin, and the results of which are now consigned to the Episcopal Archives of St. Boniface.

and will afford equal protection to the lives and property of all races and all creeds " ⁵.

Riel was so satisfied with this assurance that he had the document printed and distributed broadcast.

The progress of the expedition under Wolseley was a most arduous task, and reflects great credit on both commander and commanded. Such were the difficulties in the way, that we cannot wonder at the delay which must have sorely tried the former, who used to boast of his usual punctuality ⁶. He had promised to cover the distance from Toronto to Fort Garry in 72 days ⁷. As a matter of fact, it took him 24 days more to reach his goal.

Meantime, Riel was continuing to rule the new province of Manitoba in conformity with what had been decided at Ottawa. Nothing important happened apart from the arrival of an Irish officer, General (then Captain) William F. Butler, who had been sent west as a intelligence officer, and was soon to go and join the Expedition. Yet, if fairly uneventful, Riel's tenure of office was not of the most easy. He was constantly between two fires: between O'Donoghue, who yearned for resistance to Wolseley's troops, and Bishop Taché, who assured him of their good intentions and was for a kindly reception of them ⁸.

⁵ Begg, *the Creation of Manitoba*, p. 386, and elsewhere.

³ *Life*, p. 69.

⁷ *Rep. of the Select Committee*, Can. Blue Book, p. 162.

⁸ "It was known that before the troops reached Red River, there was a great divergence of opinion between Riel and O'Donohoe (*sic*). It was well known that Riel and his friends were anxious at the time to [let them] come peaceably into Canada, but O'Donohoe took quite a different course" (D. A. Smith, *ap. B. Willson, Life of Lord Strathcona*, p. 261).

That the Métis chief sided with the prelate is shown by the following lines he addressed to Mr. Smith a month after the arrival of the soldiery from the East:

"Expecting something far different from an honourable British officer, I, as the chosen head of the Provisional Government, which has administered here on behalf of the Dominion of Canada since last November, expected to receive Colonel Wolseley and Governor Archibald at Fort Garry and formally deliver up the Government. My guards were instructed to fire a salute and the enclosed address was to have been read to the appointed Governor in token of submission to the regime of Canada, with our rights and liberties guaranteed to us. This proceeding was denied to us, and we fortunately had news of the temper of injustice animating the [in]coming troops" ⁹.

Every outside authority goes to confirm those good dispositions of Riel. Even one of his worst enemies, Capt. Butler, is a witness to the reality of those peaceful sentiments. As the Irish soldier was telling him of the rumours which represented him as making active preparations to resist the approaching expedition:

"Nothing is more false than these statements", exclaimed Riel. "I only wish to retain power until I can resign it to a proper government. I have done everything for the sake of peace and to prevent bloodshed among the people of the land" ¹⁰.

Were any further confirmation of this needed, we would only have to adduce the letter he wrote (July 24, 1870) to Bishop Taché, who had returned to Ottawa to promote more efficaciously by verbal explanations the cause of peace and of the promised amnesty for

⁹ B. Willson, *Life*, p. 260.

¹⁰ *The Great Lone Land*, p. 134.

any possible irregularities on the part of Riel and friends.

"We are preparing ourselves", wrote the President, "for the arrival of the Governor. We shall try to show him as many horsemen ¹¹ as possible. What a task you have assumed, my Lord, in repairing to that wicked Ottawa! We have friends there, but who could count our enemies? What is consoling is to be a Christian, and to think that no real harm can happen to us as long as God is with us. Be that as it may, the troops and the Governor will be received with enthusiasm" ¹².

And in a postscript: "My profound respects to Mr. Archibald; we earnestly desire his coming" ¹³.

¹¹ To accompany him as an escort.

¹² Translated from original French.

¹³ Yet, in spite of these eminently peaceful designs, Capt. Huyshe writes that "it is evident that Riel would have fought it out, had his men stuck to him". And why is the soldier so sure of this? Because, forsooth, "inside of the fort were found several field-guns, some of which were mounted in the bastions and over the gateway, a large quantity of ammunition, and a number of old pattern muskets, many of which were loaded and capped, showing that the intention had been to the last moment to resist the entry of the troops" (*The Red R. Expedition*, pp. 196-97).

Not being a military man, we know little of those questions; but we had so far been under the impression that, especially in troubled times, guards were not wont to beat their rounds armed with empty muskets. And then we must not forget that it was Riel's intention to have his men salute the arrival of Wolsely's troops by a discharge of their arms.

Again, capital has been made of the fact that the open fort was found without the British standard flowing over its walls. Yet it is locally well known that it had been taken down only the preceding night, and that its absence at the top of Fort Garry's flag-staff in the morning of Aug. 24, was due solely to the downpour of rain, which continued to fall till the arrival of the expedition.

A few days later, one who had been living by the side of Riel ever since the occupation of Fort Garry, though he had had to suffer thereby, J. H. McTavish, wrote to the same prelate: "I feel confident that the Provisional Government are determined, *coûte que coûte*, to hand everything over quietly to the proper authorities " ¹⁴.

The French locution *coûte que coûte* ("come what may") was rendered necessary by the intelligence the same party had to communicate to the bishop concerning the Canadian sympathizers remaining in the country.

"They entertain", McTavish went on, "the hope that, as soon as the troops arrive, martial law will be proclaimed, to be followed by the hanging of a few of the French party; such is their kind expectation".

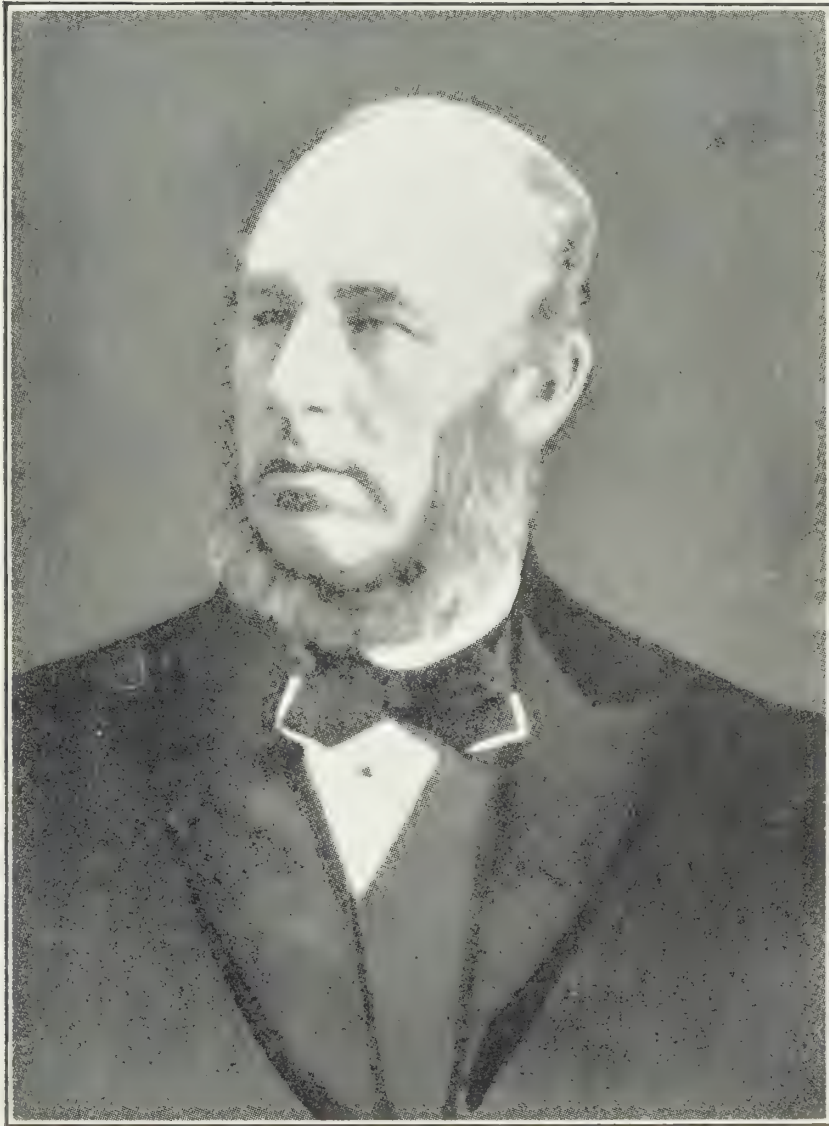
Hence the prelate's correspondent considers it "highly advisable that Mr. Archibald should be on the spot as least as soon as the troops".

Unfortunately for those who had participated in the movement, he was not; hence the flight of Riel, Lépine and O'Donoghue, when they learnt the real sentiments of most members of Wolseley's expedition, who arrived within sight of Fort Garry in the morning of August 24, 1870 " ¹⁵.

Despite the assurance he had received of Riel's peaceful intentions, the English commander then resorted to a wealth of precautions and strategical measures, which the irreverent might compare to those of a well-known Spanish knight, in front of the bare

¹⁴ Can. Blue Book, p. 36.

¹⁵ A few authors, among whom Alex. Begg in his *History of the North-West* (vol. II, pp. 20-21, make the troops enter Fort Garry on the 23rd. of August, 1871.



GOVERNOR ARCHIBALD

walls of the Fort. His entry therein was far from triumphal. Nay, the absence of all resistance from those who but yesterday thought of welcoming him must have been singularly galling to him and followers. Might not this have contributed to the excesses which were to disgrace the stay of the latter in the West?

Be this as it may, the advent of the soldiers from the East was, for the French halfbreeds of Manitoba, the dawn of an era of persecution at the hands of bigots which sorely tried their patience. Riel and Lépine were banished, and the Government of Ontario offered a premium of five thousand dollars to anyone who would effect their capture, a circumstance which rendered for them life almost unbearable and led to several attempts at outrage.

In spite of Wolseley's assurance that "his mission was one of peace", made at a time when he did not know how he would be received by Riel, the commander of the troops himself seems to have set the ball rolling by calling him and his followers *banditti*, in a second proclamation issued when he had no longer anything to fear from him.

In his first document Colonel Wolseley had declared that his force represented "no party, either in religion or politics"¹⁶. Yet one of the first acts of some members of the First Ontario Rifles was to establish an Orange lodge, for which a warrant had been carried all through the Dawson route.

Nor was the private conduct of the troopers any more satisfactory to the peace-minded inhabitants of the Red River valley. According to Butler, "the miserable village [of Winnipeg] produced as if by magic

¹⁶ Begg, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

more saloons than any city twice its size in the States could boast of. The vilest compounds of intoxicating liquors were sold indiscriminately to everyone, and for a time it seemed as though the place had become a very pandemonium ” ¹⁷.

The author who reproduces that sad picture of our incipient metropolis at the time when “ Her Majesty’s sovereign authority in the district ” was being re-established ¹⁸, an authority which the “ lawlessness ” of the Métis (mark the word!) had for a time set at naught ¹⁹, claims it was exaggerated. Yet Butler was an eye-witness to what he described, which cannot be said of B. Willson. The truth is that the new-comers, whose mission was apparently to put a stop to lawlessness, did in reality bring in the most aggravated form of it: a lawlessness, licentiousness and debauchery such as Red River had never seen.

The Rev. Mr. Young shows us “ soldiers, voyageurs and Indians — who had abstained from all intoxicants so advantageously to themselves and the entire force—now so crazed with the vile stuff they were buying at very high rates from those abominable rum-shops, as to be actually rolling and fighting in the miry mud holes of Winnipeg ” ²⁰.

“ This dreadful revelry, and worse than beastly conduct ”, the same author goes on to say, were finally checked by the exercise of the authority of Col. Wolse-

¹⁷ Ap. B. Willson, *Life*, etc., p. 259.

¹⁸ Wolseley, *A Memoir of Sir Garnet J. Wolseley*; vol. II, p.1, Londres, 1878.

¹⁹ Adam, *The Canadian North-West*. p. 209.

²⁰ *Manitoba Memories*, p. 190.

ley ²¹, and of the head of the Hudson's Bay Company, Mr. D. A. Smith, whom the former had, without any warrant, constituted acting Governor of the new province pending the coming of the Hon. Adams George Archibald (who arrived on the 2nd. of September, 1870), after the proper authority at Ottawa had appointed Riel to that office ²². It seems as if it had been written that, in the whole miserable affair, irregularities were to prevail to the very end!

On the other hand, the men of the 60th., "thinking that everything inside the Fort came under the head of spoils of war, began a regular pillage on the stores of the Hudson's Bay Company" ²³.

Is it not after this a little strange that Begg should go out of his way to insist on the honourable conduct of that regiment ²⁴ as well as of that of the soldiers from Ontario ²⁵? Those encomiums seem so little in keeping with the rest of his book that one is tempted to suspect something irregular, if not some particular

²¹ *Ibid.* Another contemporaneous author attributes its termination to the fact that there was nothing more to drink. "For the first two or three days after our arrival", writes Capt. Huyshe, of the expeditionary force, "the place seemed turned into a very Pandemonium—Indians, half-breeds and whites, in all stages of intoxication, fighting and quarrelling in the streets with drawn knives, and lying prostrate on the prairie in all directions, like the killed and wounded after a sharp skirmish. Fortunately the stock of whisky was limited, and was quickly consumed, so that these drunken orgies came to a natural end" (*The Red River Expedition*, p. 222).

²² V. Note 46 of preceding chapter.

²³ It is Begg himself who says so, (*op. cit.*, p. 391).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, *ibid.* It is quite possible that, not having the same grudges against the Métis, the members of that regiment behaved more honourably with regard to them.

²⁵ Begg, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

interest, in their insertion in the same. Might there not be some interpolation or more or less forced addition thereto? One thing is certain: the end of the little volume is not written in the same spirit as the bulk of it, nor is its Table of Contents.

“The volunteers were blamed for many acts which they did not commit”, Begg is supposed to say”²⁶, and, as an indirect confirmation of this assertion, which is contradicted by tradition and respectable authorities, he passes over a most shameful abuse of theirs of the reality of which there cannot be the slightest doubt.

On the 13th. of September, an event took place which caused considerable excitement in the Colony, says Robert B. Hill in his *Manitoba*²⁷. A quiet, upright halfbreed named Elzéar Goulet²⁸ was recognized and chased by a man who had been one of Riel’s prisoners “and also by some volunteers”²⁹. To escape from their fury, the Métis took to the water, and was swimming over to St. Boniface when his pursuers hit him with a stone on the head and killed him.

An investigation ordered by Governor Archibald, duly revealed that the cowardly murder was attributable to three men about whose identity there could be no doubt. But it was felt that, in the ugly temper of the Canadians, no arrest could be effected. Nobody was ever punished for the deed.

In this connection, Mr. MacBeth, who does not blush to hint that Parisien’s death did not result from the

²⁶ The father of the present Roger Goulet, the able and respected school inspector of St. Boniface.

²⁷ P. 328.

²⁸ Father of the present Roger Goulet, the able and respected school inspector of St. Boniface.

²⁹ Hill, *Manitoba*, p. 328.

ill-treatment he had received at the hands of the Kildonan crowd, records that of Goulet as a mere drowning³⁰! Yet, because of his cloth, most readers probably believe that he tells the whole truth.

Another violent death for which the new-comers, or their friends who had preceded them in the country, were responsible was that of Guilmette, who was tracked as far as the United States and there dispatched by personal friends of Thos. Scott or some hirelings in their employ. He was killed perhaps a week after he had fled to that country.

The same Canadians who had come to restore order and abolish "lawlessness", shortly thereafter rendered themselves guilty of an outrage of a different kind. We relate it in the words of Lord Strathcona's (D. A. Smith's) biographer.

"A body of French halfbreeds", writes Beckles Willson, "had made a selection of a tract of land at Rivière aux Islets de Bois; some of them had made farms, or, at all events, enclosures at that place. Elsewhere there was abundance of land equally good, but the new-comers preferred this spot. They entered on that ground and staked it off, put up huts, and declared they would hold it against all comers. To give character to their occupation, they discarded the name by which the river had been known, and called it the Boyne.

"Naturally, the feelings of the half-breeds were outraged; it was bad enough to lose land they believed to be theirs, but in the new name they detected an insult to their religion. Property, race and creed were all to be flouted. They met in the parishes of Assini-

³⁰ *The Making of the Canadian West*, p. 164.

boine and Red River, resolved to drive off the intruders " ³¹.

It took all the powers of persuasion of the new Governor himself to prevent them from accomplishing their design. For the sake of peace, they desisted, and to this day said intruders, or their descendants, are in possession of their ill-gotten lands in the vicinity of what is now Carman.

Riel, O'Donoghue and Lépine had been obliged to expatriate themselves. But as the first was known occasionally to visit his home in St. Vital, ruffians from Winnipeg would make unexpected raids upon his mother and family, to lay hands on the former president and gain the money promised by a Government (Ontario's) which had not the slightest jurisdiction over him.

Nor was that all. The same enemies of "lawlessness" caused the death of a Mr. Tanner, who fell from his rig whose horse the soldiers from the East had wilfully frightened.

Another day, André Nault, who had guarded the British flag against the rage of O'Donoghue, suffered on American soil repeated thrusts of Orange bayonets and was left for dead. Rowdies of the same hue went even so far as to threaten to kill "big Taché", and burn his house and church.

In short, as Governor Archibald wrote confidentially to Sir John Macdonald, "many of the French half-breeds have been so beaten and outraged that they feel as if they were living in a state of slavery " ³².

Such was the way the new-comers from the East were eradicating from the West the "lawlessness" which Capt. Adam had been noticing in the time of Riel...

³¹ *Life*, p. 262.

³² Can. Blue Book, p. 156.

And yet the victims of these would-be upholders of "law" were the very men who, under the lead of Riel, were to save the West to the British Crown, as we shall presently see. And we deem it especially sad that we should have to conclude a work in which we have been wading through the incessant inaccuracies of our predecessors in the historical field by pointing to a determined and most ungenerous attempt, even of the latest one, to rob the Métis of a credit which the highest authority of the land emphatically granted them—and that, in the case of that latest author, after we have furnished him with incontestable proof that said authority, the then Governor, was quite right.

Just one remark before we enter upon that painful subject. It is our duty to show that the racial animus by the mention of which we have commenced this work was not the exclusive foible of the soldiers³³ and of Canadians, who repressed "lawlessness" by showing themselves murderers and highway robbers. The commander of the former had his full share of it. The regular troops did not stay long in the country, and, in a proclamation wherein Wolseley heaped on them well deserved praise for their powers of endurance and general good conduct on the way, he dishonoured himself by styling Riel and his lieutenants "leaders of the banditti who recently oppressed Her Majesty's loyal subjects in the Red River Settlement"³⁴.

Now as to the above mentioned final exhibition by the English authors of little regard for truth when the French halbreeds are concerned. It is well known that untruthfulness can be manifested not only by the

³³ Especially of the recruits from Ontario.

³⁴ Schofield, *The Story of Manitoba*, p. 297.

enunciatio falsi, or a false account of events, but by the *suppressio veri*, the wilful omission of what is true and is necessary to clothe a narrative with its proper colours. Now we unhesitatingly accuse these writers, Schofield among the rest, of being misleading, let alone unfair, by suppressing perhaps the most important evidence of Riel's loyalty to Canada, even in the face of the most bitter persecution on the part of its popular representatives.

Despite the most telling document published within the last thirty years, Schofield, who must have been cognizant of it since he quotes ³⁵ from an essay which contains it, had the heart to ignore it and thereby give the impression left by his predecessors (who must have known of Archibald's declaration to the contrary) that, in a moment of national peril, the French half-breeds came to the rescue of the Manitoba Government only when they knew that it was too late!

The document which we published in our *Aux Sources de l'Histoire manitobaine* was an irrefragable proof that this was *not* the case, and, since, the late A. H. de Trémaudan had, in a more important periodical, "The Canadian Historical Review", which no American historian can afford to neglect, a still more complete paper entitled *Louis Riel and the Fenian Raid of 1871*, giving out the same document with a wealth of telling notes and comments. How did Schofield, who wrote after the issue of those pages, profit by their publication?

He keeps an absolute silence on them, and states that "the danger of a Fenian invasion had passed three days before" the Métis assembled in St. Boniface to be reviewed by the Governor ³⁶, thereby falling in

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

line with the former historians who, like Mr. Young, claimed that the French offered their services only when "the danger was entirely past and not a Fenian remained in the country" ³⁷.

In fact, Schofield speaks afterwards of the "uncertain attitude of the Métis" ³⁸, and asserts that "the Government suspected him [Riel] of duplicity in this matter" ³⁹, which is perfectly untrue. At any rate, the Governor, who was then more of "the Government" than anybody else, convinced himself, writes B. Willson ⁴⁰, "that this exhibition of fidelity was genuine and *bonâ fide*".

And for that we need not take the word of Lord Strathcona's biographer. Official documents of the day prove it. Here is what Archibald wrote himself:

"Father Ritchot had informed me that everything was going on satisfactorily, but I desired to inform my mind from different and independent sources. There were a number of French who never sided with, and were never personal friends of, Riel, and I got information from these to the effect that Riel attended a meeting at White Horse Plains, about a week *before* [italics ours] the invasion, and did his best to induce the people to turn out and join the Government; that nothing was decided at that meeting, but that two or three days afterwards a meeting was held at the same place, at which Riel took the same view; that then there was an arrangement that all should meet at St. Vital on the next day, 4th. of October; that they did then meet, and then Riel took the same line, and it

³⁷ *Manitoba Memories*, p. 221.

³⁸ *The Story of Manitoba*, p. 312.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

⁴⁰ *Life*, p. 294.

was finally decided by all but two of the meeting that they should join the Government and come out.

“The two refusing had been assaulted at Winnipeg, and it was with them a personal matter”, concludes the Governor ⁴¹.

Schofield and others had this important document at their disposal when they wrote. Can anyone say why they did not use it, nay why they stated just the opposite?

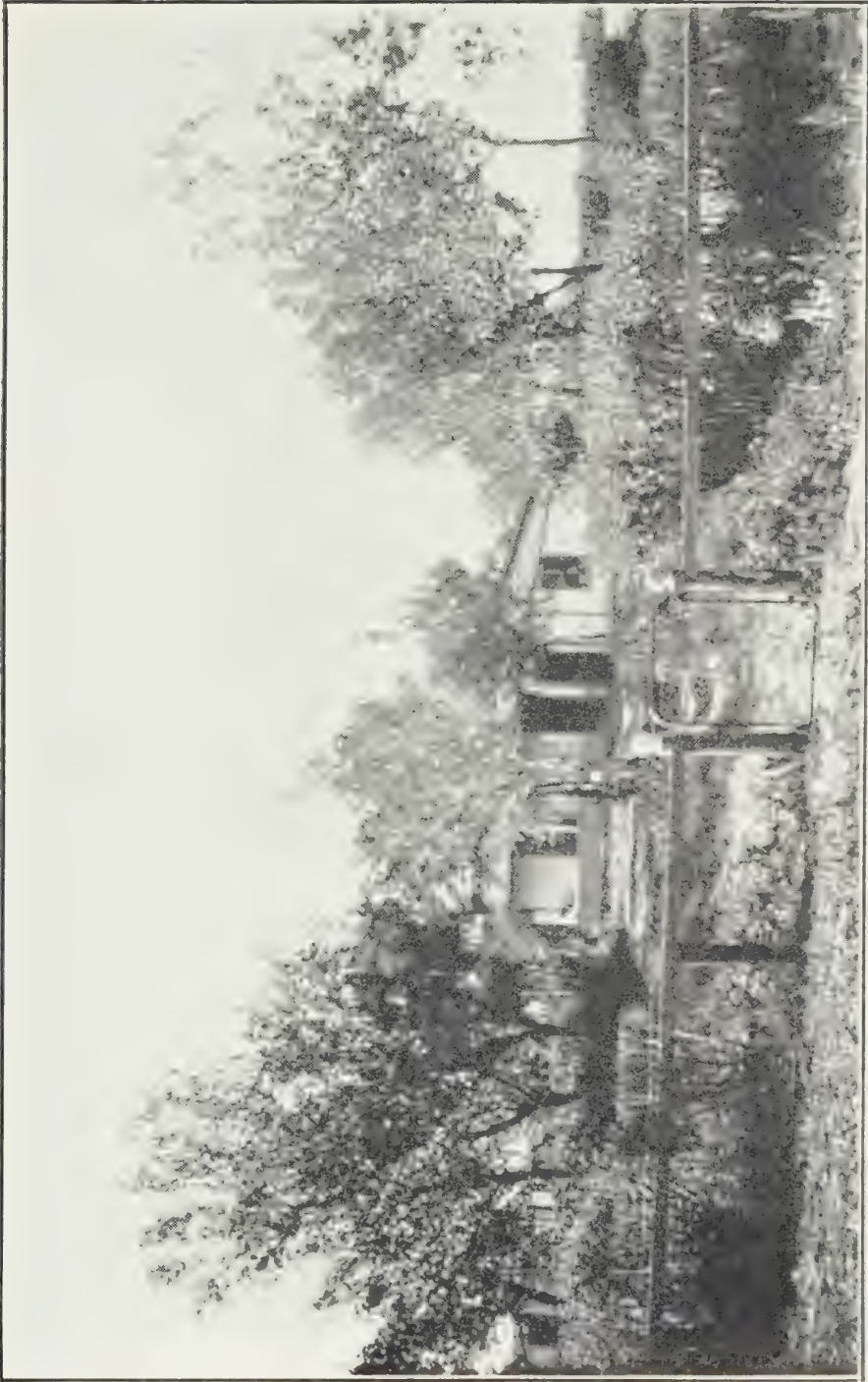
Before we come to the no less significant piece of writing in our own essay *Aux Sources de l'Histoire manitobaine* we mentioned above, a contemporary piece of writing which gives the lie to the accusation of the Métis' supineness in enlisting against the Fenians, a slight retrospect on previous aspirations of the United States with regard to what we now call the Canadian West will help still better to understand the situation which suddenly faced the new authorities of Manitoba.

It is certainly not beyond the bounds of probability that when, in 1867, the United States acquired Alaska, they counted on some contingencies that would ultimately do away with the isolation of that Territory. There can scarcely be any doubt that they had in Assiniboia agents who closely watched the situation, and strove to make it turn to their advantage.

This was known in Ottawa, and, as early as June 22, 1866, “the Executive Council of Canada expressed the opinion that the most inviting parts of the Territory [Assiniboia] would shortly be peopled by persons whom the Company were unable to control, and who would establish a government and tribunals of their own and assert their political independence” ⁴².

⁴¹ Can. Blue Book, p. 146.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 171.



LOUIS RIEL'S HOUSE

On March 8, 1868, that is scarcely a year after the acquisition of the Russian possessions, the legislature of Minnesota passed the following resolution:

“We regret to be informed of a purpose to transfer the territory between Minnesota and Alaska to the Dominion of Canada, by an order in council at London, without a vote of Selkirk and the settlers upon the sources of the Saskatchewan River, who largely consist of emigrants from the United States ⁴³; and we would respectfully urge that the President and the Congress of the United States shall represent to the Government of Great Britain that such an action will be an unwarrantable interference with the principles of self-government, and cannot be regarded with indifference by the people of the United States ” ⁴⁴.

It was scarcely possible to confess in clearer language the covetousness of the Americans for the Canadian West. Hence the interest with which the least of Riel's sayings and doings were watched at the frontier, and the offer of immense sums of money, arms, and ammunition ⁴⁵, which came from the south, but were spurned by the so-called rebel.

Having failed to make him and his people waver in their fidelity to their Sovereign, when they were in power, the Fenians of the United States (who were but the tools, the vanguard of the American people of the north) thought that this loyalty must have vanished now that Riel had become an outlaw, and his sympathizers were downtrodden by the strangers from Ontario. The invasion of Manitoba was therefore resolved upon by O'Donoghue and the other Fenian leaders.

⁴³ An altogether gratuitous assertion.

⁴⁴ *Ubi supra*, p. 28.

⁴⁵ Bishop Taché in Can. Blue Book, p. 42.

Success was a matter of certainty provided the French population joined in the fray⁴⁶. They were known to be "excellent horsemen, accustomed to the use of arms and to obey the leaders whom they themselves select, when they traverse the plains in search of the buffalo"⁴⁷. After the shedding of the first blood, they could have easily raised corps aggregating eight hundred or more choice men to be marched against the eighty soldiers that remained at Fort Garry "to preserve the peace of half a continent", as Governor Archibald had it⁴⁸.

Moreover some two thousand workmen, with a large percentage of ex-soldiers who had seen fire in the Civil War, had just finished their work on railways within Minnesota. Most of them were now idle, and would have been delighted to lend their aid against the hated Britishers.

Speaking of one of the Fenian leaders, Tuttle, the continuator of Gunn, remarks that O'Donoghue "was almost certain of receiving a friendly reception from the French half-breeds, while it was doubtful whether

⁴⁶ Schofield has it indeed that, in answer to a proclamation calling for levies by Lieut.-Governor Archibald, no fewer than a thousand men immediately enlisted, to repel the Fenians. In view of the still sparse English population of Manitoba, one is quite warranted to doubt the accuracy of that figure. At all events, there were only 650 rifles in Fort Garry (Schofield, *the Story of Manitoba*, p. 311). The number of the Manitoba loyal levies seems to be in line with the declaration of the Minneapolis "Tribune", which, on Nov. 24 (1869), stated that the French insurgents had increased to over 1000 men (Brit. Blue Book, p. 24).

⁴⁷ Can. Blue Book, p. 28.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

the English half-breeds were so much in love with Canada as to fight on her behalf ”⁴⁹.

According to the historian R. Hill, “ O’Donoghue’s plans were to cross the frontier with a body of armed men, compelling every man he met to accompany him, either as a prisoner or as a confederate, and thus swell his ranks till he reached the parish above the fort, which contained the main body of the population.

“ These, he believed, would join him at once and aid in taking and plundering Fort Garry; when he would be reinforced with a sufficient number of men from the United States to enable him to hold the country ”⁵⁰.

In a public document, the Lieutenant-Governor himself acknowledged that the French population, but yesterday derided and oppressed, was now the key to the situation, and the Fenians believed it ready to fall into their arms and aid any invasion⁵¹.

To make sure of this, however, O’Donoghue secretly dispatched a courier to the leaders at St. Vital, and, on Riel’s advice, André Nault went with another to confer with the prospective invaders, as the Métis chief wished to ascertain the real aims of his quondam lieutenant at Fort Garry.

In the greatest secrecy a meeting of the Fenian leaders was held in the house of a Charles Grant, some eighteen miles from the mouth of the Pembina River. They assured the delegates of the Manitoban Métis that they had already enlisted three thousand five hundred and sixty men, had plenty of money and relied on plans of campaign which honest Nault could not help finding of a rather drastic nature. Yet he re-

⁴⁹ Gunn and Tuttle, *History of Manitoba*, p. 470.

⁵⁰ *Hist.*, pp. 337-38.

⁵¹ Can. Blue Book, p. 147.

frained from commenting on the same, promising only to give a faithful account of all he had heard to Louis Riel and friends.

Meanwhile Bishop Taché had left for the East, but not before he had had a conversation, at St. Norbert, with Riel, whom he sounded on his real sentiments. The Métis chief declared that he "hated the Fenians, because they were a secret society and as such condemned by the Church". At the same time, he was in a quandary. "I cannot go forward and combat them", he remarked, "for those that will come after me [meaning the new-comers from the East] are sure to kill me ⁵².

But, being convinced that "the country would be lost" ⁵³ if even part of the French turned against the provincial authorities, Lieutenant-Governor Archibald had an interview with Mr. Ritchot, the outcome of which was a letter dated October 4, 1871, wherein the clergyman explained Riel's delicate position and expressed the wish for a declaration of immunity from prosecution in case he would come out of his retreat.

Archibald answered on the morrow in the following terms:

"Your note has just reached me. You speak of the difficulties which might impede any action of Mr. Riel, in coming forward to use his influence with his fellow-citizens, to rally to the support of the Province in this present emergency.

"Should Mr. Riel come forward as suggested, he need be under no apprehension that his liberty shall be

⁵² They had already killed Goulet, Guilmette and Tanner, and left André Nault for dead.

⁵³ Can. Blue Book, p. 90.

interfered with in any way, to use your own language, *pour la circonstance actuelle* ⁵⁴.

“It is hardly necessary for me to add that the co-operation of the French halfbreeds and their leaders in support of the Crown, under the present circumstances, will be very welcome, and cannot be looked upon otherwise than as entitling them to most favourable consideration.

“Let me add that in giving you this assurance with promptitude, I feel myself entitled to be met in the same spirit.

“The sooner the French halfbreeds assume the attitude in question, the more graceful will be their action and the more favourable their influence” ⁵⁵.

This was written on the 5th. of October. Riel was now free to act. Where is the reader in his right senses who will say that he could have done anything previous to that day?

On that same 5th. of October, thirteen of the most influential Métis met in his house, at St. Vital. It was the good fortune of the present writer to publish, over twenty-five years ago, the minutes of that and the following meetings, after the original record of the same, in Louis Riel's own handwriting, still quite legible in spite of the yellow tinge given it by time—the important document already referred to, from which we will borrow these details.

In the first place, we gather from the beginning that

⁵⁴ “For the present circumstance”, had said Fr. Ritchot. Where does Mr. Schofield see that “Father Ritchot had declined to urge him [Riel] to use his influence with the Métis against an uprising, unless Governor Archibald would promise the long-sought amnesty for their former leader” (*The Story*, p. 312)?

⁵⁵ B. Willson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona*, 293.

the halfbreed leaders were, on the 5th. of October, almost hourly expecting the return of André Nault. After the enumeration of the names of those who took part in the proceedings, the secretary of the meeting says: "No details on O'Donoghue", and Nault, who assisted at all the subsequent assemblies, is not mentioned in the first.

Now, as the English historians could not well ignore the loyalty of the French halfbreeds in that trying emergency, they have generally stooped to the unfair expedient of insinuating, or even plainly stating, as we have seen, that they offered their services only when they knew that they were no more needed⁵⁶. What is the conviction imposed on the reader, prejudiced or not, by the above mentioned minutes? Let him only carefully note the following.

O'Donoghue, with four of his "generals" was captured by Americans near the boundary on October 5th. The first meeting of the Métis leaders took place at 11 A. M. of the same day, and, though absolutely nothing could be known of the O'Donoghue fizzle, twelve out of thirteen halfbreeds (including Riel) declared themselves in favour of assisting the Provincial Government against the invaders.

At 9 A. M. of the following day, nothing had as yet transpired concerning the Fenian reverse. Nay, Nault and companion, just arrived, reported that "Fort Pembina must have been taken since Wednesday morning... O'Donoghue wanted the co-operation of the Métis for the success of the declaration of independence of the

⁵⁶ See Hill, p. 346; Gunn & Tuttle, p. 471; Young, 221, etc. Bryce fails to mention in any of his books the part played by the Métis in the Fenian raid.

country; he had money, and in time he could introduce five men into the land as against Canada one" ⁵⁷.

This was indeed encouraging. Did the Métis chiefs swerve on that account from the allegiance to the Queen whose fellow subjects had been treating them "like slaves" ⁵⁸? The majority, Riel, A. D. Lépine, E. de Lagimodière ⁵⁹, François Dauphinais, Angus McKay, were warmly in favour of the legitimate authority, whilst the others, without exception, were loyal, but did not manifest such enthusiasm. The assembly decided that "couriers must immediately be dispatched in all directions" to convoke local meetings of the people and persuade them to side with the Government".

This, we repeat, was before O'Donoghue's failure was known, on the sixth of October. Can anyone tell us how the general result of those meetings could have been achieved sooner? Or who can show any moment lost after Riel had been assured of protection against assassins?

As a consequence of the agitation which ensued, companies of Métis soldiers were formed at St. Boniface, White Horse Plains, Pointe des Chênes, Ste. Agathe, Pointe Coupée, St. Norbert and St. Vital, all with a view to aiding the Government against the invaders, who were known to be concentrating their forces at St. Joseph, near the boundary, where all reliable authors (as well as Governor Archibald) say that the attack was sure to be renewed in a more serious manner.

⁵⁷ Morice, *Aux Sources de l'Histoire manitobaine*, p. 108; Quebec, 1907.

⁵⁸ Cf. Can. Blue Book, p. 156.

⁵⁹ Alias Lagimodière.

On October 7th., Riel formally offered by letter the services of his forces, and, after having thanked him, October 8th., for his loyalty and that of his men, the Governor purposely crossed the river to review at St. Boniface some three or four hundred⁶⁰ of them led by the ex-President of the Provisional Government and his adjutant, A. D. Lépine⁶¹.

Shortly thereafter, some of them were actually sent to meet the prospective invaders from St. Joseph.

But, on hearing of this most unexpected stand taken by the French, the Fenians lost heart, and the Canadian West was saved to the British Crown. "If the

⁶⁰ Schofield and others say 100 (*The Story of Manitoba*, p. 312); others again, 4 or 500.

⁶¹ For this act of prudent condescension, he was brutally assailed by the *Manitoba Liberal*. As nothing can so well illustrate the unreasoning fanaticism of the new Manitobans, we extract this pearl from Rev. Young's *Manitoba Memories*, and present it to the reader:

"We briefly referred in our last to the fact that, on Sunday afternoon, the 8th. inst., the Lieutenant-Governor was sent for by Louis Riel who, with about one hundred of a gang who aided him in his villainies of 1869 and 1870, took up a position on the east side of the Red River, opposite Fort Garry. The summons was duly and expeditiously answered by His Honor's appearance among them, and in the blaze of day, and withing a gunshot of the place where Thomas Scott was murdered, the Queen's representative shook hands with the murderer.

"It will be seen from other columns that Riel, on hearing of O'Donohue' (*sic*) failure at Pembina, decided, instead of going to join that worthy as was his original intention (!), on offering his services to Mr. Archibald. The acceptance of his services was in entire accordance with the Lieutenant-Governor's policy. We cannot find language to express the deep humiliation created in the minds of the people who witnessed or heard of this climax of insult to loyal men in the Province" (*Ap. Young's Manitoba Memories*, p. 225).

half-breeds had taken a different course, I do not believe the Province would now be in our possession ”⁶². It is no less a personage than Lieutenant-Governor Archibald who says so, in his sworn deposition before the Select Committee of 1874.

Was it honest for Manitoba historians to conceal all that from their readers?

In keeping with this ridiculous piece of ignorant impertinence is the following fact. When, after the review, the Governor wanted to lodge the Métis troops in the Fort, a Lieut. Hay squarely refused to allow of it, declaring that he and his men would rather throw away their arms than have those men for partners in the defence of the country, and another officer supported him in his insubordination. The Governor had to yield to that petty bigotry, and all he could do was to obtain that Pascal Breland and his company of scouts be admitted within the precincts of the Fort.

⁶² Can. Blue Book, p. 153.

THE END.

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N after a figure stands for "note"; *b* for "biography"; *t* for "text", and *tn* "text in note", while *R.* is used for "Riel". A subject mentioned in two consecutive pages is indicated by the first page only.

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